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The Infant Phenomenon:
Shakespeare, the Mimetic Child, and Nineteenth-Century British Literature

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Abstract

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This dissertation defines the figure of the mimetic child and traces its progression and development from the works of Shakespeare through the nineteenth century. The power of the mimetic child depends upon the striking historical parallelism of anxious reactions to the theater and to the figure of the child; both are inherently mimetic, holding a mirror up to nature, but in these imitative processes of representation and creation, both become their own sometimes disturbingly individual entities. This suspicion of the mimetic capacities of the theater and of child's play is found in Plato, but is most provocatively explored in Shakespeare's plays, and in their subsequent cultural reverberations.

This work therefore, traces the intersections of children, theatricality, and Shakespeare, guided by the figure of the mimetic child, through the nineteenth century—a period anxiously concerned with the purpose, presentation, and propriety of all three. The opening study of Shakespeare’s child characters as mimetically empowered extends into an argument for the parallelism of the developing figures of the child and of Shakespeare himself, as they secure social significance and inspire comparable reactions of both delight and anxiety through their imaginative and mimetic powers. These kinds of responses, and the related division of approaches to juvenile educational practices into encouragement of fancy and didactic promotion of morality, leads to analysis of nineteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare for children (and, more broadly, “domestic” audiences), and eventually to the generic shift which allows for consideration of Frankenstein’s monster, and other characters from nineteenth-century novels, as defining their narratives through their status as mimetic children and their related links to Shakespeare. The final chapter looks first at the development the mimetic child from literary motif and novelistic incarnation to living breathing body in the study of nineteenth-century child actors, before moving into analyses of theatricality, generic variation, and Shakespearean influence in the Peter Pan narrative. By recognizing and examining the figure of the mimetic child across such a broad temporal and generic range, both within and outside of literary texts, this dissertation argues for the ongoing significance of the interrelations of Shakespeare, children, and (anti)theatricality to understanding the development over the course of the nineteenth century of each of these areas, as well as larger questions of education, parenting, genre, and mimesis.

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For Mom, to making better
and for Herb: “Nothing will come of nothing.”

Introduction: The Mimetic Child

Book II of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) states that it is in the nature of the child "to want to create, imitate, produce, give signs of power and activity. It will not take two experiences of seeing a garden plowed, sowed, sprouting, and growing vegetables for him to want to garden in his turn" (98). In this passage, Rousseau, who is generally held responsible for the creation of the modern notion of childhood, both isolates and synthesizes the defining characteristics of this study's governing figure: the mimetic child. The urges highlighted here—juvenile impulses toward creation, imitation, and production, each of these being tied up with innate desire, an active mind and body, and ultimately, with power—are precisely those which coincide in this child figure who appears in literary works from Shakespeare through the twentieth century, and whose trajectory is explored in this dissertation. Generally, Rousseau situates the child in relation to his educator, and to society more broadly, and promotes educational practices which recognize the innate power of the child's natural mimetic urges and redirect them towards conventional social functionality. These external authoritative presences persist throughout my study, both as characters within texts, and in the form of educational theorists, adaptors and editors, legislators, and self-aware authors and playwrights, whose modes of representing children (and re-seeing Shakespeare) all demonstrate an anxious awareness of their performative agency which speaks to the social situation of the child.

Rousseau represents the child's impulses as at once imitative and independently productive, and in this combination, powerful. That children, historically defined by their weakness, might come to be seen as powerful is a result of developments in the conception of the child figure. It is only in the later years of the eighteenth century, following the attentions of Locke and Rousseau, that the idea of the child as an independent entity and of childhood as a

distinct and significant period of life emerges. *Emile* posed the child as “somehow unique, qualitatively different from (and in some senses superior to) the adult” (Richardson 9). These novel understandings begin to take a serious hold on the literary and cultural imagination over the course of the nineteenth century, as the prevailing “classical silence and neglect of childhood” (Pattison 20) gives way to the child’s assumption of a “virtually unprecedented significance” (Richardson 9). This significance extends to a variety of child figures, both imagined and actual, including literary representations of children, children as readers and as consumers—two distinct but importantly interrelated roles, considering the increased availability of “games, toys, books, and apparel designed specifically for children”—and “real” children as acting members of society (Richardson 9). As Richardson’s list suggests, the developing recognition of the figure of the child complicated and challenged existing notions of the power relations between adults and children, seen up until that point as unequal. Kate Chedgzoy addresses the “fundamental disempowerment of young people in relation to adults” in Shakespeare’s plays (20), for example, but with the increased attention to children in this period, there is a significant shift in this dynamic as the child figure begins to be characterized more regularly as empowered through its natural impulse to imitate and embellish adult models. No longer the simple victims of adult schemes and subordination, the “unblown flowers” (IV.iv.10), slaughtered by Richard III, nineteenth-century children are consumers, players, readers, and mimics of adult society, with the specifically tailored theatrical apparatus of sets, props, scripts, and costumes highlighted by Richardson above.

What this study reveals, however, is that Shakespeare’s children are not themselves the “legendary instance(s) of childhood helplessness in the face of adult cruelty” (Belsey 32) nor the “dramatically unsuccessful” non-presences (Garber 30) that they are frequently held up to be but

are in fact essential thematic and narrative components of the plays, and their efficacy is specifically dependent upon their imitative qualities. Richard's nephews, for example, who are icons of juvenile vulnerability well beyond the bounds of the play, infuse their brief stage presence with vivacious linguistic combativeness, imagination, and mimicry. York engages in banter with Richard in which he echoes Richard's own words and turns them back on him by giving them new meaning and context. He also notes his brother Edward's mockery of both York himself and Richard, and builds upon it by referring to himself as an ape (III.i.129). Richard dubs his nephew "parlous," a dynamic word which acknowledges their cleverness and mischief, while also communicating an undercurrent of menace (deriving as it does from "perilous") and attribution of that dangerousness directly to cunning. In this particular context, it seems likely that the additional implication of skillful wordplay (as in the French "parler" and its related linguistic associations) is also intended. Thus Richard himself, who clearly values theatricality and the playing of roles (he announces his own typecasting in his opening soliloquy, determined to play the role of villain given his unfitness for any other part), grants his "fundamentally disempowered" nephew not only artfulness, but also threatening agency. Of course, the boys present a real political threat to him too in the context of the play (and history) but the choice to include this scene of children's imitative and linguistic play in order to communicate that threat, and to connect to the larger thematic framework of *Richard III*, is an example of Shakespeare's recognition of the power of children—both in literature and in life—as little actors, and his recurring appeal to the mimetic child as literary device. The persistent educational, adaptive, and allusive presence of Shakespeare, heightened in the nineteenth century as the figure of the child becomes more firmly established, can therefore be ascribed not only to his status as an admired

national patriarch, but to a critical need by society's adults to reframe his mimetic children, harnessing their energies for more valuable and controllable purposes.

The mimetic child in Shakespeare and beyond is a tenable conceit only because of the remarkable yet not frequently remarked upon parallelism of literary and social anxieties about children and about the theater. Expressions of feeling toward children and toward the institution of the theater have been throughout history consistently ambivalent, and frequently communicative of an uneasiness that originates with Plato and is solidified in Jonas Barish's seminal study of antitheatricality. The anxiety which marks the natural association of children with the theatrical, and the accompanying privileged access to the imaginative, and therefore to the creative and mimetic, becomes more pronounced as children gain power as a recognized social entity. The power attributed to the child figure as a result of the simultaneity of imitation and autonomous creativity is rooted in the innate tendency of the child to play, an instinct which can be the object of adult voyeuristic pleasure, but can also unsettle in its elusion of fixed meaning and adult control. A child at play is in control of his surroundings, creating an imaginative space which is frequently an interpretation of the adult world, but which the adult is incapable of penetrating, directing, or even understanding.

Socrates' comment in the *Republic* that "a young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal" (Plato 64) is intended to suggest a susceptibility to misunderstanding of truth (or at least, ideal truth) by artistic representation, but it also voices a common critical underestimation of the child's privileged position of imaginative free play and agency since the lack of distinction is due not so much to an inability, but to flexibility and the relaxed unconcern of the imaginative. Children's mode of operating both as literary characters and as people is imitative, but in the style of an opera's da capo aria; though the mimetic child's conception and

expressions of being derive from the models, parental and otherwise, which surround him, he also demonstrates an unsettling autonomy of independent creative power. In literature, this duality often takes the form of textual echoes and repetitions (alliance with models), and the use of those repetitions as starting points for new and independent directions, suggesting both the efficacy of the mimetic child as a literary device, and the natural evolution of such motifs to the point where they can be said to align with actual children.

This performing child figure, therefore, is both attractive and dangerous, the play of children both serious and trivial. Play (often imitative play) is how children learn about the world, and there is a far less discrete separation for them of the imaginative and the real. And yet, they are also comfortable with play being “just play,” in a way that becomes more difficult for adults to accept, particularly when it is wholly the domain of the child. L.R. Goldman argues from an anthropological perspective that “[p]lay as pretence emerges ... as an imaginatively constructed and linguistically realized pathway between simulation and mythologisation”—that is, between “*mimesis* and *mythos*” (xvii). Goldman turns to Plato and Aristotle to show how “throughout the history of theorizing about these perennial issues of truth and representation, art and society, paradigms of child make-believe often served as both a prototypical and ontogenetic picture of how humans do and ought to exist” (17), an argument which increases the stakes of considering performing children as both literary and social figures given the consistent substitution of children for mankind or culture in their infancies (Goldman 17). Both Plato and Aristotle represent juvenile fantasy play as important for “role socialization,” but also as a “menace,” “potentially subversive of social order because of its inherent capacity to innovate and transform rules,” whose “dramatic impersonations... carry the potential to infect with false ideas” (17). In incorporating these classical anxieties into his anthropological study of contemporary

children and in invoking such darkly anxious histrionic language to characterize the menace, subversion, and infection that is children playing, Goldman links the anti-theatrical prejudice directly to the “innocent” activity of children at play. The relevance of this anthropological approach validates study of this performing child figure in its early stages and as it develops throughout the nineteenth century—pure and innocent, but also artfully, deceptively, theatrically, creating and controlling the world(s) around it.

The notion of the mimetic child incorporates elements of each of Alan Richardson’s four abstracted paradigms for representing children in the Romantic era (a traditional Christian view, the environmentalist view, the organic, and the transcendental), while also engaging questions of power. Due to their natural inclinations towards play, imitation, and representation, and their imaginative access, children are often represented in literature both concerning and directed towards them as performative. Imbued with natural, ethereal, childlike innocence, in constant dialogue with its surroundings, willful and in need of discipline, transcendental in its access to the otherworldly, significantly grounded in the physical realities of its body, the mimetic child becomes at once an amalgamation of the various ways of representing children in the nineteenth century and a specifically recognizable figure.

Of Richardson’s paradigms, the transcendental child is the most relevant in developing the more specifically performative concept of the mimetic child. “Informed by a divine or quasi-divine nature which renders it superior to adults” (Richardson 11), the transcendental child appears repeatedly in Romantic poetry, but persists and evolves throughout the nineteenth century, with such children appearing as “illuminated presences” in Victorian novels (Auerbach, *Private* 21). This child is distinguished by its mysterious divinity or supernatural quality, its superiority to the adult, and its privileged liminal position between various realms to which adult

access is more problematic. These realms, which may include the visible and the invisible, the rational and the sensual, the past and the present, even the living and the dead, can generally be related to the distinction between the real and the imagined. Auerbach suggests that, like the ghostly children she discusses within literature, “real children to whom fantasy literature appeals are equally separate beings, colonizing fantastic countries adults need but cannot reenter” (*Private* 46). This paradigm of children as readers, though, can be shifted back onto children as literary figures, whose readings of experience then also become representative of that imaginative inaccessibility which so haunts the wistful Wordsworth of *The Prelude* in his lament of the loss of juvenile perspective: “[w]ould that I could now / Recall what then I pictured to myself” (VII.106-107). As an adult tracing the growth of his own poetic mind, in a work intended as a preface to a work which would never be finished, Wordsworth is continually haunted by the imaginative agency of the child and its absolute inaccessibility. What is essential to the characterization of the mimetic child is that this privileged way of seeing, linked to the mimetic creation of imaginative worlds, is specifically theatrical (as evidenced by Auerbach’s titling of her chapter on ethereal spectacular children in Victorian novels “Little Actors”).

The genealogy of the child figure, the fossil record of its progression, branches outward from the initial efforts of writers like Locke and Rousseau to theorize the child and to attempt in doing so to contain and direct its power, mimetic and otherwise. The child is then traced through Romantic idealization into the late Victorian period, where its most critically recognized expression is in the cultural phenomenon of the cult of the child. In tracing the development of the concept of childhood, Hugh Cunningham notes the polarity which followed and perhaps resulted from the works of the Romantic poets between the “bleak, urbanized, and alienated” state of adulthood and the image of childhood as “a garden, enclosing within the safety of its

walls a way of life which was in touch with nature and which preserved the rude virtues of earlier periods of the history of mankind,” and the resultant casting of the child as ‘the other’ for which one yearned” (3). This characterization of the division of adult and childhood worlds introduces the opposition of rural and urban spaces, as well as the view of childhood as an enclosed space with limited and privileged access. The garden also summons images of the processes of botanical fecundity, as seen in the opening citation from *Emile* and as recur in various forms in many eighteenth- and nineteenth- century works which concern, address, or portray children. This kind of imagery often serves as a metaphorical parallel with education and parenting, arguing for the productive payoff of thoughtful and laborious nurturing, and foregrounding the continued association of children with nature. This is also a hint at the remarkable fluidity with which authors of such works and predecessors of them, like Shakespeare, represent the (re)productive processes of fertility, conception, delivery, and product (initial evaluation to future path) in the cases of humans, plants, and art.

Further, the association of childhood with natural and botanical imagery recalls the rise of the figure of the noble savage, and emphasizes the processes by which, in the early nineteenth century, the qualities associated with this character begin to be “projected wholesale on to childhood” (Cunningham 100), resulting in the related (but not identical) trope of the child of nature. To distinguish between the noble savage and the romantic savage (with which he associates the romantic child, familiar to us from writers like Wordsworth, as detailed below), Cunningham quotes Bernard Smith’s characterization of the noble savage as expressive, in his self-sufficiency and natural contentment, of the “classical desire for a state of natural perfection” (100). The romantic savage, by contrast, possesses a child’s “unrealized accomplishments,” and is therefore representative of “the childhood of man” and “the ideal of life as a voyage, a

continuous movement towards an ever-receding goal” (Cunningham 100)—of something, as Wordsworth would have it, “evermore about to be.” While the Romantic savage in his unfinished state of continuous movement—or suspended continuity in characters like Peter Pan—is more directly associable with childhood, it is the notion of savagery which is most pertinent to my arguments about the mimetic child, particularly considering its progression from Shakespeare (himself a child of nature), through the monstrous performing children of *Frankenstein* and *Peter Pan*. Even glorified savagery, which suggests purity, promise, and naturalness, implies ferocity and the necessity for wariness on the part of the civilized—or, as will be extended throughout this work, the adult.

The evolved transcendental child, encompassing the ethereality, naturalness, and theatricality amended by Wordsworth, Auerbach, and others, is especially important to the trajectory of thought considered here in that the combination of strangeness and liminality in the child, its distinct “separateness from watching [adult] humanity” (Auerbach, *Private* 46), and its indomitable sense of play identify it as inherently performative. The tension between childhood and adulthood is, like that between form and sense, or innocence and experience, dialogical, and potentially mediated by play, and is therefore implicitly related to the problematic notion of theatricality in the nineteenth century—innocent and childlike in its spirit of play, but adult in its vulgarity and intrinsic and essential relation to experience.

It is the cooperation of these various elements—imitation, creation, power, association by nature, and the promise of something greater outside of the realm of every day existence—which lead naturally to the integration of this argument’s other primary component: the constant and unavoidable presence of Shakespeare in the sphere of nineteenth-century literary development, and the ongoing connection between the playwright and his works, and the figure of the mimetic

child. A character like Caliban, who features prominently throughout this dissertation, embodies the gravity with which the imitative play of offspring can become menacing, while still incorporating elements of the child of nature motif. Even Shakespeare himself, who like a child demonstrates formidable imaginative power through mimesis, strikes an important parallel with the mimetic child. It is not only the author's image and the content of his works, though; it is also that he remains a revered but also domineering creative presence—a controlling parental figure—which places nineteenth-century authors and adaptors inevitably and simultaneously in the positions of cowed disciple and defiant mimetic child.

Romantic literature—itself substantially and self-consciously operational in the shadow of Shakespeare—is largely responsible for the “central position [childhood] continues to hold in the Western cultural tradition” (Richardson 9), but simply identifying centrality glosses over the ambivalence which characterizes even the most Romantic of representations of children, and also limits the potential of specific readings of figures within that tradition, and their relation to the social realities of their real world counterparts. The broad importance of figures like Wordsworth in establishing a Romantic ideal of the child has been mentioned above, but a reading at this point of Wordsworth's “We Are Seven” will help to identify specific tendencies in the representation of the child which extend back to Shakespeare's mimetic children, through Romantic poetry and novels like *Frankenstein*, and into the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as calibrating my own emphasis on developing arguments through close textual readings of literary works. The poem is an ideal convergence of the characteristics of and anxieties towards the child as mimetic literary figure. The poem's catechistic dialogical structure is an imposition of (adult) form onto (juvenile) sense; in the child's “natural supernaturalism” and her consequent liminal privilege, in the specific nature of the realms which she transcends, and in the

resulting performativity of the poem, inseparable from its dependency on play, the adult-child exchange offers a model in miniature of the function of this figure which extends through the Never Lands of the early twentieth century.

From the initial encounter, the “little cottage girl” seems at once prosaic and ethereal, from her cherubic curls “clustered round her head,” to her “rustic, woodland air”—a phrase which somehow conflates the rural simplicity of Wordsworth’s toiling pastoral figures, with the evasive mystery of a classical nymph—to the similarly complicating repetition of the description of her eyes as “fair, and very fair” (5-11). Richardson addresses the poem’s exposition of the catechistic method as “a fundamentally closed travesty of discursive exchange”; the girl “fails to give her questioner the doctrinal response his question regarding death anticipates,” and refuses “to distinguish between dead and living siblings” in a way that “strikes the adult as paganistic” (71). He quotes Heather Glen’s reading of the poem as the “irritating insistence of the rationalizing adult...defeated by the child’s refusal to accept his categories” and Mary Jacobus’ recognition of the adult’s “misplaced didacticism” met with “inspired obstinacy at odds with adult preconceptions” (qtd. in Richardson 71), and goes on to offer his own reading of the way the poem in fact affirms adult categories by “reversing the roles of adult and child while maintaining the hierarchical structure of their relation...the child is mother to her man, her ‘utter inability to admit’ the notion of death validating the poet’s own childhood intimations of immortality” (71).

This reading is persuasive, but it depends upon general ideas about the poet rather than attention to the structure of the poem, which does not allow for the kind of reversal proposed, since the power structure of the catechistic method depends upon the superiority of the questioner, and the power of the poem depends on the girl’s unvanquishable child-ness. The

frustrated exclamatory repetition of his desired answer is anything but validating, and he is, as Glen argues, defeated, both in his attempt to catechize, and in the elusion of any answer to the question posed in the opening stanza. But both Glen's and Jacobus' readings minimize the importance of the girl's liminality and the disorienting playfulness of the poem. "You run about," the speaker reminds the little girl, grounding her concrete reality in her childlike physical activity; she remembers the deaths of her brother and sister in terms of play: "together round her grave we played, / My brother John and I. / And when the ground was white with snow, / And I could run and slide, / My brother John was forced to go, / And he lies by her side" (33, 55-60). The frustration of the speaker is less didactic than the above interpretations suggest, and the validation of the "poet's own childhood intimations of immortality" becomes less plausible as the poem makes evident that there is a problem of access; the adult attempt to rationalize is the speaker's desperate attempt to access the easy alternative understanding available to the "wildly clad" cottage girl.

Similarly obstructive is the line, deceptive in its sing-song simplicity, in which the girl replies to the adult speaker's persistence with "Their graves are green, they may be seen..." (37). Here is another instance of the perceptive privileging of the child that consistently troubles this narrator, and that remains fraught far beyond this work: the relation between the visible and the invisible, and the despotism of the eye. "In Wordsworth's view," James McCusick writes, "an excessive reliance on visual data, to the exclusion of more immediate sensory modalities of sound and touch, will result in a subjugation of the mind to the cold materiality of external objects. Lost in such a materialistic vision is the 'dreamlike' character of childhood perception" (McCusick 56). It is this dreamlike character—in that liminal space between the literal and the allegorical ("their graves are green," but "God released [little Jane] of her pain")—that the

speaker tries, through formal adult means, to vanquish, and it is in the girl's playful freedom from the despotism of the rational and the visual that he fails. Here are the same problems of the impenetrable imaginative privilege of the child which frustrate Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, and which will continue to color interactions between adults and mimetic children in a multitude of nineteenth-century literary contexts.

Before introducing the figure of his nymph, Wordsworth opens the poem by posing the question of what “a simple child / that lightly draws its breath / and feels its life in every limb” should know of death (1-4); the juxtaposition of this question with the exchange which follows represents Wordsworth own critique of the Romantic idealization of the child as falsely oversimplifying. At the end of the poem his opening question remains not only unanswered but seemingly more opaque, since the child's refusal of the adult logic of the poem defeats even this rhetorical structure, and the reader is left with no clear sense of either what a child *ought* to know of death (her triumph suggests that her knowledgeable lack of acceptance supersedes conventional notions of death) or what she does know (since her effortless denial of adult form reinforces the epistemological barrier between the adult and juvenile world views). The proposition of the child as simple is consequently rendered ironic, a shift which suggests that Romantic poets and authors like the Lambs (see Chapter Two) were no less conflicted in their portrayals of children than those members of the Victorian cult of the child whom Marah Gubar seeks to exonerate, as discussed in my final chapter.

That even the definitive Wordsworthian child—the clearest conceptual link between Shakespeare and Peter Pan—is clearly not a beacon of simple rusticity and is instead a complex and anxious network of ideas about adult-child relations and their literary representations is a function of juvenile performative control. This child demonstrates those distinct characteristics

identified in Shakespearean mimetic children, and is empowered by her status as a child and her natural inclination to play; her play becomes easy navigation of boundaries between adults and children, the real and the imaginative, and even death and life, and the poem's formal struggle reflects the adult discomfort with his own inability to either penetrate or appropriate her world view. Many of the child's features, especially her close association with nature, and her innovative imaginative and untroubled response to subjects like death, have their roots in Shakespeare and the perception of him as childlike, which is the starting point for this study.

Chapter One brings the child figure together with Shakespeare in two distinct but interrelated ways, both of which help to establish the role and importance of the mimetic child. The chapter begins with a survey of the (relatively limited) critical conversation surrounding the children in Shakespeare's plays, and builds to an argument about such children—like *A Winter's Tale's* Mamillius, and the unfortunate son of MacDuff—as exemplars of the traits associated with the mimetic child. Close readings of these characters and the textual integrity of their imitative but simultaneously autonomous modes of play help to identify a set of characteristics—privileged insight, precocity, cruelty, and the capacity for creation, both artistic and biological—which define the mimetic child, and set the scene for the progression of the child figure through the nineteenth century. The delineating of these traits also narrates the logical movement into the second part of the chapter which shifts from the pages of Shakespeare's work, to the critical and public conception of the figure of the national poet, connecting this image to that of the nineteenth-century child figure as literary character, reader, and social subject.

Robert Shaughnessy suggests a connection between “[t]he emergence of a conception of Shakespeare as a ‘child of nature’ towards the end of the eighteenth century, the formation of a new market of juvenile readers of Shakespeare, and the increasing importance of children and

childhood more generally within the cultural imaginary” (2-3). The reverent but anxious cultural responses to the play, imagination, performativity, and therefore power found in popular conceptions of both children and Shakespeare create a strong link between the two which only solidifies the importance of Shakespeare’s dramatic attention to children, and the fraught nature of juvenile adaptations of his work. As children began to gain new kinds of power with their increased importance, Shakespeare’s cultural, educational, national, and theatrical prevalence made his name and works an instrument of dynamic power. Thus, various applications, appropriations, and adaptations of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century represent views on parental and educational power relations, as well as often appealing to the formative powers of Shakespeare as a civilizing force, not only in English libraries and schoolrooms, but across the empire.

Such adaptations, and their connection to the previous chapter’s questions of mimesis, children, and Shakespeare are explored in my second chapter, “Family Shakespeares.” Bowdler’s notoriously expurgated “Family Shakespeare,” and Charles and Mary Lambs’ prose *Tales from Shakespeare* are the primary texts, given their notability, contemporaneity, and frequent pairing in spite of significant textual and ideological differences. Beginning with analysis of *The Tempest*’s representations of education, parental control, and performance, and introducing in Prospero the counterpart of the performing parent, the chapter then goes on to consider the ways these “educational” texts undermine the performative power of the play’s mimetic children and prioritize Prospero’s narrative authority, while also expressing discomfort with female (re)productivity. A comparative reading of *Othello* in its original and adaptive forms argues for the interrelation in all texts of gender and storytelling, and the importance of these for Shakespearean editors (like Mary Lamb and Henrietta Bowdler). The reception histories of the

works are also considered, as is the importance of the particular adaptors' relations to Shakespeare and to their own parents, both of which help to establish them as reflecting in their own writing practices those same tendencies which define the mimetic child, a coincidence which emphasizes both the anxious attraction to Shakespeare, and the genealogical association of parenting and the production of art.

Georgiana Ziegler's essay on early versions of Shakespeare for children provides a useful conceptual framework for the chapter, particularly in its identification of "two strands of thinking" about children's literature—essentially imaginative vs. didactic—but the close analysis of the adaptations reveals that this dichotomizing is as misleading as is the oversimplified Romantic notion of childhood, with writers like the Lambs expressing hesitation about the imaginative power of children through the prioritizing in their texts of juvenile submission and parental control. Jameson's *Shakespeare's Heroines, or Characteristics of Women* and Mary Cowden Clarke's series of prose envisionings of *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* take up the questions of gender and genre which originate in the first chapter and demonstrate liberation of themselves and their heroines from their constrictive patriarchal contexts, placing greater emphasis on female creative power and showing a progressive relation to Shakespeare and his representations of children and women as independent creators which has real significance for juvenile and female readers and social subjects.

Chapter Three, "Of Mimicry and Monsters," explores the shift of the mimetic child from original and adapted Shakespearean texts into the nineteenth-century novel, where the ambivalence towards performing children expands into the grotesque monstrosity of Frankenstein's performative offspring. Shakespeare is of course (much like childhood) ever-present as an impossible ideal for most Romantic writers, and finds his way into *Frankenstein*

via the anxieties imparted to Mary Shelley by her father William Godwin and his simultaneous fascination and discomfort with the theater, through thematic kinship with works like *The Tempest* and *King Lear*, and by direct allusion as well, all of which are addressed in this chapter. The Godwin-Shelley relationship is itself demonstrative of many of the principles of the mimetic child, which then come to be echoed and distorted in the monster and his connection with his own progenitor. That the creature's obvious monstrosity derives at least in part from his mimetic and performative energies legitimizes the recognition of parallel, if less grotesque, monstrous juvenile presences in other nineteenth-century novels, including works by the Brontës, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. To children in all these works are ascribed those same characteristics of creativity, privileged imaginative vision, precocity, and cruelty, all of which are linked to their inherent inclination towards imitative play and associated with theatricality. I also consider the performative otherness of the child as extending to questions of size, scale, and perspective, both in *Frankenstein* and other novels like *Villette* and *Wuthering Heights*, where children penetrate domestic spheres (and affect narratives) due to their mimetic tendencies.

This consideration of the nineteenth-century British novel and its relation to mimesis and to Shakespeare gestures towards the possibility of a more global consideration of the mimetic child in its appeals to the postcolonial theories of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha (invoked in my chapter title) to argue for the usefulness of the metaphorical reading of colonizer and colonized as parent and child respectively for illustrating the grounding of the mimetic power of the child in its own inalienable otherness. Spivak herself brings together *Frankenstein* and *The Tempest* as she considers education and empire, but in this context the intersection offers yet another instance of nineteenth-century reinterpretations of Shakespearean mimetic children, with

Bhabha's concept of colonized subjects as "almost the same but not quite" being equally applicable to mimetic children, in Shakespeare as in *Frankenstein*.

The fourth and final chapter—"The Infant Phenomenon: Victorian Performing Children and the Case of Peter Pan"—takes up the progression of the mimetic child from literary motif and novelistic incarnation as it takes the stage, provocatively penetrating the sociopolitical sphere of the Victorian theater scene, and the living breathing bodies of its child performers. The consideration of the public taste for children on the stage, and the resultant contemporary debates and legislative processes surrounding the propriety of such performers, also echoes some of the editorial practices discussed in Chapter Two which sought to control the unnerving performative and imaginative energy of Shakespeare's works, and creates a parallel between the legal regulation of the social interactions of children, and the late Victorian impulse to purify or de-theatricalize productions of Shakespeare's plays (which had by this point reached extravagant proportions), representing an ideological return to the associations of children and Shakespeare established in Chapter One.

The Victorian social phenomenon of the cult of the child and the essay by Ernest Dowson which shares its name are important documentations of the development of conceptions of children and childhood over the course of the nineteenth century, and of the persistent presence of the figure of the mimetic child and the accompanying adult response of simultaneous attraction and repulsion. Oft referenced but defined and explored with surprising infrequency and lack of detail, this largely and characteristically Victorian valorization of the innocence and imagination of children, depends upon a "complete polarization of adult from child" (Andrews 22), which renders the child "exotic and heartbreakingly attractive" (Kincaid 30). Dowson's essay, while full of Romantic effusions about a child's natural artlessness," is also a political

treatise defending, in the midst of a contemporary debate, the social role of children as professional stage performers (Gubar, *Artful* 153), and represents a Victorian relocation of Romantic ideas of childhood dependent upon the association with the performative. Discussions in the chapter of the attraction of the Victorian child performer are laced with an ambivalence related to that which I have outlined above, and provide a fascinating juxtaposition of art and artlessness in nineteenth-century children—the impossible simultaneity of innocence and pretence.

Besides a number of historical and literary works concerning children as stage performers (including Dickens' portrayal in *Nicholas Nickleby* of the Infant Phenomenon, for whom this work is named), the central texts of this chapter are the various incarnations—adult novel (1902), stage play (1904), excerpt collection (1906), children's novel (1911), and finally playscript (1911), and this of course excludes the vast array of later adaptations and resurfacings—of J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan narrative. This story, including its inherent theatricality, the commentaries implicit in its evolution and the distinctions between its various generic incarnations (like the enhancement of juvenile creative agency through performance in the stage version), and its subtle but significant Shakespearean influences, represents an important culmination of my arguments about the figure of the mimetic child and its progression throughout the nineteenth century.

As a whole, then, this dissertation argues for the importance of the mimetic child figure as fundamentally established in Shakespeare's works and in the contemporaneous evolution of the child figure with the cultural perception of Shakespeare as himself a mimetic, imaginatively empowered, (super)natural entity, and as it is represented, co-opted, and revised throughout the nineteenth century. These reincarnations are both indicative and determinant of social attitudes

towards children at each historical stage, affecting children as characters as well as real children as readers, students, consumers, and actors on the stage and giving voice to the persistent social anxieties toward the performative agency of the child.

Chapter One: Children and Shakespeare

While juxtaposing “Children” and “Shakespeare” constrains to some extent the evident breadth of each of these subjects by specifying the field of analysis, it also amplifies the complexity of both of the categories, since each brings with it an elaborately constructed history, and these histories begin to interweave. Recent critical work has shown increased attention to the many implications of this important pairing. 2007’s *Shakespeare and Childhood* (Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Robert Shaughnessy, eds.) is one of the more thorough explorations, and reflects the dynamism of the parallel in its two-part structure, which addresses the entities of my title, and communicates the volume’s “dual concern with the historical origins and contexts of Shakespearean childhoods and their continuing history of cultural reinvention” (Shaughnessy 6). The first section of the collection, “Shakespeare’s children” focuses on the children who appear in Shakespeare’s plays, and the historical realities which would have stood behind those dramatic characters. The editors propose to explore “what being a child might have meant, both to children, and to adult others, during this period, and...how these meanings were reflected, constructed and negotiated by children both as the subjects and the agents of fictional, theatrical and poetic representation” (6). The essays in the second section of the book—“Children’s Shakespeares”—consider material spanning a period from the eighteenth century to the present, and “selectively address the cultural history of the relationship between Shakespeare(s) and childhood(s)” during that time (7).

There is significant overlap between the values and intentions of *Shakespeare and Childhood*, and the goals of this chapter, but it is also important to call attention to the distinctions. As Shaughnessy has noted, this collection is initially concerned with Shakespeare’s child characters, both how they appear and function as facets of literature, and how they can be

read historically as representations of “real” children; the book is equipped with a thorough appendix which attempts to account for all children who appear in the plays, including pages, fairies, and unborn children indicated by pregnant women. The impulse found in many of these essays to connect these onstage children to the early modern reality of the child is less of a concern here, where children in the plays will be discussed primarily in their capacities as mimetic literary figures; consideration of their relation to “real” children will be less focused on historical authenticity, and more on dramatic verisimilitude, a popular concern among recent critics of Shakespearean child characters.

Shaughnessy’s observation that “Shakespeare and the cultural construction of childhood have been interlinked since the early modern period,” (7) is representative of the governing principles of the second section the book, those which are most closely related to the work being done in this chapter, and in its relation to my larger critical project. This chapter focuses on that interlinkage, as well as on an effort to create a hitherto elusive bridge between the two disparate sets of ideas around which *Shakespeare and Childhood* is organized, to think productively about why the nature and function of children in Shakespeare’s plays continues to matter to the relation of Shakespeare as a writer and cultural figure to children, particularly in the nineteenth century. In the introduction to the book’s second section, Susanne Greenhalgh recognizes the cultural value of this link: “[t]he ‘rewriting’ and ‘reimagining’ of Shakespeare for the young, together with the incorporation of children and child references into the textual, artistic and performance history of the plays, does indeed provide a promising seam for future critical investigation and research” (132).

In a review of *Shakespeare and Childhood* which pairs it with Carol Chillington Rutter’s *Shakespeare and Child’s Play*, Anthony Dawson identifies the concerns of both texts as having

been “strangely invisible—until now”; deeming the books’ lists and appendices which call unprecedented attention to the substantial number of significant children in the works “a revelation,” Dawson admits, while “we all know about Shakespeare’s almost obsessive interest in family...I (and I suspect I am not alone) have not thought much about the children who people the plays, nor had I thought there were so many” (89). Also reviewing *Shakespeare and Childhood*, Tom MacFaul argues that while, as several of the book’s essays demonstrate, “this is an area of Shakespeare studies with great potential to unlock key features of the human life of the plays and of the theatre’s aesthetic,” the link between the two different kinds of questions the book asks—“What is the significance of the children who appear in Shakespeare’s plays? And what significance has Shakespeare had for children in the last three centuries?”—remains superficial, and “attempts to answer [those questions] will find little common ground, as this book demonstrates” (282-3). These two excerpts are representative of the general response to the recent rise in critical attention to various relationships between children and Shakespeare in their assertion of its being a hitherto underexplored realm of literary and sociological material, “strangely invisible,” “with great potential,” and it is in acknowledgement of the value of this relatively underexposed field that I undertake the project at hand; it is also, however, in the interest of articulating the nature of that common ground which MacFaul was unable to find between the significance of Shakespearean children and Shakespeare’s interest in children and childhood as literary and dramatic devices, and the “rich histories of negotiation, exchange and appropriation that have characterized the works’ subsequent relations to the cultures of childhood in the literary, educational, theatrical and cinematic realms” (Shaughnessy 2). The concept of the mimetic child, established in my introduction, frames the analysis of child characters in Shakespeare’s plays as deriving their literary and dramatic efficacy from their mimetic

tendencies; building upon the arguments about these characters, I then proceed into the nineteenth century to pose a valuable connection between the contemporaneous evolutions of the child figure and the public image of Shakespeare himself, and finally to suggest how these ideas about Shakespearean children, and parallel readings of the figures of Shakespeare and of the child, might inform our understanding of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare's works for children (discussed at length in Chapter Two).

Before moving into an exploration of these "rich histories," and of how we might arrive at them via the characters of the plays, though, some brief discussion of the critical attention Shakespeare's children have received seems in order. Morriss Henry Partee's *Childhood in Shakespeare's Plays* (2006) attempts, with detailed analysis but unfortunately limited argumentation, to demonstrate that Shakespeare's "extensive awareness of the special nature of children" suggests greater complexity in Elizabethan understandings of children than is often allowed by scholars, who frequently operate under the assumption that early modern children tended to be seen merely as little adults (10). Partee takes issue with limited readings of the "verisimilitude and the artistic merits of Shakespeare's child characters," including oversimplified sentimentalizing like A.C. Bradley's which stresses "the bravery and sweetness rather than the precocity, the innocence rather than the irritability" (9), or dismissals like Marjorie Garber's of the children in the plays as "not, by and large, successful dramatic characters" (30). Rutter, too, in the text mentioned above, ascribes both literary and sociohistorical importance to Shakespeare's children, who tell "stories that reframe the stories we tell about ourselves" (xii). Rutter's approach, like that of *Shakespeare and Childhood*, connects the children in the plays with the genealogy of the concept of childhood. Rutter takes issue with the argument proposed by Phillipe Ariès (and, she says, taken up by Lawrence Stone)

that “the idea of ‘childhood’ was unknown in early modern European culture” and that high child and infant mortality rates led to affectionless parents unwilling to risk their “emotional capital” on “such ephemeral beings” (Rutter xii-xiii). She declares Shakespeare’s child characters the “best refutation” of this fallacious proposition, and argues that Stone, Ariès, and Fumerton, in their assertions that children were seen as “expendable,” as “smelly and unformed...little animals, and as “trivial,” were, “as Shakespeare shows,...quite simply, wrong” (xii-xiii). Both Rutter and Partee quote Marjorie Garber’s assessment of the “very few” and dramatically unsuccessful children in Shakespeare’s plays as ‘both pert and malapert, disconcertingly solemn and prematurely adult,’ possessing a “disquieting adulthood [which] strikes the audience with its oddness, [such that] we are relieved when these terrible infants leave the stage. We may feel it to be no accident that almost all go to their death” (30). The pervasive questioning of the precise status of these child characters recognizes their value, and is in most cases concerned with their relevance and effectiveness as dramatic figures—both in terms of their closeness to or the quality of their differentiation from real children (or at least, to ideas about children), and as far as their relation with the audience is concerned. These assessments are not directly concerned as I am (and as is essential to any important understanding of why these characters are in the plays at all) with the connection of child characters to their particular texts; verisimilitude is less important for establishing the figure of the Shakespearean mimetic child than is the imagistic textual value of these characters.

The recent increase in attention to such characters has led a number of critics to express surprise not only at the potential significance of the child figures to the plays, but even at their being there at all (as seen in Anthony Dawson’s review, quoted above). As Mark Heberle observes, though, “[w]hile the number of Shakespeare’s child characters may not seem large in

itself, it is extraordinary in comparison with the work of post-Renaissance dramatists writing for an adult audience” (30). As is apparent in the brief discussion above, when the presence of children in Shakespeare has been acknowledged, and when some kind of literary or sociohistorical import has been granted them, the question of why we should consider them seriously, and not simply as little animals, little adults, or little victims is still answered many different ways. The ongoing critical arguments about the children in Shakespeare’s plays, though, do seem almost without exception to circle around questions of power and agency, both in terms of whether the children are seen within the texts as helpless victims, and whether they are granted any efficacy as literary objects. The conception of children as, by definition, in an unequal power relationship with adults was addressed in my introduction, as was the natural association of power with performance. The performative mode, therefore, allows the study of children and Shakespeare to be seen as investigating “key features of the human life of the plays and of the theatre’s aesthetic,” (MacFaul 282) while revealing much about “hopes and anxieties that continue to circulate around childhood,” (Greenhalgh 132) and simultaneously bridging the gap between the arguably realistic early modern children written by Shakespeare (and their inarguable status as literary and dramatic figures) and the subsequent interaction of children in various periods with the works of Shakespeare.

Shakespearean Children

The notion of performativity acts as a conceptual bridge between the children in Shakespeare’s plays and the later interrelations between Shakespeare and children—both the parallels between the figure of Shakespeare and the figure of the child, and the various reinventions of his life and work which concern children. Considering child characters in their immediate dramatic context, as I will proceed to do here, ground this inquiry initially in the plays

themselves. Attention to critical perceptions of Shakespearean children, though, and to Robert Pattison's in particular, provides a useful framework within which to consider and develop this chapter's arguments about the mimetic qualities and textual importance of the children in Shakespeare's plays.

In *The Child Figure in English Literature*, Pattison takes as his epigraph lines from Thoman Gray's 'Eton' ode, "[a]las, regardless of their doom, / The little victims play!" which, evocative as they are of many of Shakespeare's child characters, seem at odds with critical conceptions like Garber's, or like Carol Chillington Rutter's which casts children as both haunting and stubbornly material in their simultaneous representation of past, present, and future (xiv). Shakespeare is entirely absent from Pattison's chapter on "The Preromantic English Tradition," which moves from Chaucer to Marvell to Fielding; the following chapter, however—entitled "The Sentimental Aspects of the Child Figure: Wordsworth as Heretic,"—begins with Pattison's comment that "[t]he children of Shakespeare's plays are drawn with a flourish of sentiment more characteristic of the Victorian era than the period in which they were created" (47). As evidence of this, Pattison refers to the depiction (by their murderer) of the young princes in *Richard III* (whose complexity as characters is discussed in my introduction). Shakespeare's interest in children, Pattison argues, "is slight, and his willingness to portray childhood realistically is slighter still: Mamillius of *The Winter's Tale* sounds more like Touchstone than an infant" (47).

Pattison uses a brief and decontextualized moment to suggest that Mamillius is unlike any "real" child, and to proceed to his assertion that Shakespeare is concerned less with "childhood itself" than "with the sentiment inherent in the representation of childhood," which he uses for "melodramatic effect" (48). Seen in its proper context, though, the scene which

Pattison has extracted from *The Winter's Tale* is not particularly sentimental, and is arguably representative of many of the realities of childhood, beginning as it does with Hermione's plea to one of her ladies, "[t]ake the boy to you. He so troubles me, 'Tis past enduring" (2.1.1-2).

Uncharacteristic both of the patient, loving, virtuous, maternal Hermione, and of Shakespeare in its blunt and lifelike simplicity, the opening of this scene, and Mamillius' subsequent swaggering juvenile recalcitrance ("No, I'll none of you") seem designed to establish a sense of domestic verisimilitude and ordered disorder. Pattison's argument that Shakespeare's children represent a "brand of sentiment" which "elicits an emotional response by demonstrating that the innocence of childhood is a short-lived phenomenon in an otherwise blighted world," (49)¹ doesn't seem to be the case even in the scene which he has directly quoted as his support. It is true, of course, that most children don't speak as Mamillius does in much of this scene, but then, it is also true that most people do not speak in the kind of poetry voiced by Shakespeare's characters.

Pattison's point is that Mamillius is unrealistic, melodramatic, and overly sentimentalized, but the recognition here of his consanguinity with Touchstone—one of Shakespeare's many vociferous wise fools—is suggestive of the more complex function of Shakespeare's child figures, and of their tendency to assume a powerful figurative agency, in spite of (or perhaps even with the aid of) their seeming victimhood, and to do so through their performativity. In fact, the idea of the mimetic child seems to allow for concurrent entertainment of seemingly contradictory critical observations about Shakespeare's dramatic children. For example, though Rutter has declared Marjorie Garber to be "quite simply, wrong" (xiv) in her assessment of Shakespearean children, the lens of performativity places their respective critical projects in a fascinating and cooperative dialogue. Because of their tendency towards imitation

¹ From this idea Alan Richardson derives the sentimental convention for representing childhood in the Romantic era; Richardson quotes directly from both Pattison and Gray.

and performance, and their seeming access to the imaginative and other privileged realms, children can be “terrible infants,” “disconcertingly solemn and prematurely adult,” (Garber 30) and also “stubbornly material...ghosts,” “constitutive of adult projects,” embodying at once the past and future (Rutter xiv). Pattison’s declares Shakespeare’s children sentimentally innocent, either “murder victims or helpless participants in a grotesque spectacle of carnage and death”; the following analysis will show this to be, while not untrue, oversimplified, and will help to locate the work such children do to “lift these plays out of the realm of historical drama and onto a plain of cosmic malfunction” not only in the “pathos of their representation,” as Pattison would have it, but also in their mimetic tendencies and the power of juvenile performance.

I will return below to Mamillius’ clowning, dismissed by Pattison as evidence of Shakespeare’s lack of interest in realistic portrayals of children, but will first turn to another Shakespearean child, that “egg” whose onstage death is “the crisis [*Macbeth*] has been driving at since Duncan’s murder” (Rutter 165). In a play dominated by avian motifs, anxiety about children, and concern with nature and the unnatural, the strange exchange between the ill-fated Lady Macduff, and her similarly ill-fated son (Act IV, Sc II), assumes greater complexity and significance when examined through the lens of the mimetic and performative child. Before young Macduff speaks, Lady Macduff, in her conversation with Ross, introduces the Macduff contribution to the play’s obsession with birds; she initiates discussion of her husband’s behavior by wondering aloud what he has done “to make him fly the land” (1). She questions his wisdom, after referring three times to his abandonment of his family as “flight,” and then develops the metaphor, as well as incorporating the all-important idea of what is natural, as she declares: “He loves us not, / He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren, / The most diminutive of birds, will fight, / Her young ones in her nest, against the owl” (8-11). Ross—outside the immediate family

circle, perhaps not even beyond suspicion of treachery here—does not respond to her natural analogy, his only metaphorical suggestion being of the “wild and violent sea” of uncertainty and belief in rumor. It is young Macduff who, after the departure of Ross, replies to his mother’s questioning how he will live in the event of his father’s effective death by mimetically—and playfully—echoing her (and the play’s) avian fixation: “As birds do, mother” (33). This simple response is of manifold significance for the figure of the mimetic child in Shakespeare; young Macduff responds mimetically to his mother’s affectionate yet aggravated translation of her own adult concerns into maternal questioning, asserting his presence initially by mirroring her own wordplay, and one of the play’s dominant motifs. Further, his plan for survival, rhetorical as it is, is itself mimetic—he will live “as birds do”—and importantly, is derived in imitation of nature.

The odd conversation between them continues in a mode which is catechistic, and decidedly performative. Where Lady Macduff initially responds to his assumption of her metaphorical strategy by dubbing him a “poor bird,” she finishes by calling him a “poor monkey,” and a “poor [p]rattler,” securing with maternal authority his status as both mimetic and performative. These terms also suggest that the child, while pathetic, is not particularly likeable. The oddity of his discourse and the coldness of his reason bestow upon him that disquieting adulthood that Garber has recognized, and also suggest the sort of emotional distance we often find in Shakespeare’s fools, and which may have led to Pattison’s observations on Mamillius. Like Lear’s fool, like Mamillius, Macduff’s son is playful, but not: he is a Shakespearean child who is defined simultaneously by play, and by an inappropriate gravity which colors and disrupts that play; curiously, and in contrast to much previous criticism on such characters, they manage to appear not as little victims, as Pattison would have it, but as otherworldly representatives of

the nature of children, self-aware performers of their own roles, as well as of the plays' dominant concerns.

Though such children may be unrealistic in the conventions of their language, it is also true that they are unsettling because they are imbued with an idea of the child figure which, according to standard literary history, would not come into prominence until the late eighteenth century. The children in Shakespeare's plays are mimetic of adults, of nature, of the plays themselves. By mimicking their parents, and being performative, Shakespeare's children contribute to the conceptual development of the plays and their patterns of imagery. While it is certainly possible that they might be played realistically, their language offers them greater capacity for significance. They often seem to perform an awareness of their role as pawns; children in general (perhaps especially in the nineteenth century) are frequently endowed with a quality of otherworldliness or portrayed as inhabiting liminal spaces, Shakespeare places his child characters in a space between mimicry of reality (holding up mirror to real children) and self-consciousness of their literary role. This results in both their evident theatricality, and their tendency to highlight through performance the plays' motifs, which are frequently themselves mimetic and often to do with children or nature.

In *The Winter's Tale*, as in *Macbeth*, childhood is of great thematic importance. It is therefore unsurprising that the significance of the plays' memorable children would surpass their minimal stage time. Like young Macduff, Mamillius is integral to his play because of his very presence as a child and heir, and because of his uncanny mimicry of the play's imagery. Unlike Macduff's egg, though, Mamillius is featured prominently in the first few scenes of the play, and is seen in direct conversation with his father. Mamillius appears in only two scenes in *The Winter's Tale*, and is mentioned in two others; he is praised in the opening, then interacts with

his father (I.ii) and his mother (II.i), and then is reported first “declin’d, droop’d” (II.iii.14), and finally, dead (III.ii.145). Despite (or perhaps because of) the fleetingness of his role, he becomes an enduring symbol of the consequences of Leontes’ irrational jealousy and the play’s larger concern with the promise and irretrievable innocence of youth, of the past, and of the pure bonds forged there. Thus initially, Mamillius is associated with the play’s more general thematic attention to childhood, and he also helps to clarify Leontes’ emotional position and to situate it in relation to the ideas which will define the play.

It is in the specifics of his interactions, though, that he reinforces the figure of the Shakespearean mimetic child; besides his broader relevance as a Boy, Mamillius’ significance as a character is determined in part by the question of the representation of parents in the physical traits of children, as well as the natural inclination of children towards imitation and performance, and that play discussed earlier which is at once guileless and unnerving. With respect to the connections detailed above between performative imitation, literary self-consciousness, and children and creation, Mamillius is central to the larger textual and thematic concerns of his play.

Even before Mamillius appears, he is inextricably woven into the play’s thematic tapestry, as the opening scenes acknowledge the importance of childhood both to the play as a whole, and to the audience’s understanding of the character of Leontes, past, present, and future. *The Winter’s Tale* begins, like many of Shakespeare’s plays, with a conversation between two minor characters in the course of which information important to our understanding of the events to follow is divulged. Most prominent in the exchange between Archidamus of Bohemia and Camillo of Sicilia, besides the deferential hospitality between the two kingdoms, is the source of that international friendship in the boyhood camaraderie of their respective sovereigns, and the

“unspeakable comfort” and “great promise” of the young prince of Sicilia, Mamillius, who “makes old hearts fresh,” and who will be dead by Act III (I.i.34-38). At the play’s opening, then, the importance of childhood is firmly established, as is the understanding of it as wholesome, formative, and full of promise. The relationship of Leontes to Polixenes is explained here, as Camillo reports that the two “were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now” (I.i.22-24). The botanical metaphor suggests the wholesome, organic, deep-rootedness of the kings’ youthful fraternity, while the branching indicates its present flourishing, but with a possibly more troubling recognition of their division. The image is also important in its evocation of the men as two branches of the same tree.² Because of this solid, earthy bond, rooted and branched, Leontes continues to identify with his childhood playmate. It is Polixenes who tells Hermione that he and Leontes “were as twinned lambs that did frisk i’ the sun / And bleat the one at th’other,” exchanging “innocence for innocence”; these lambs, though, Polixenes continues, dwelt in innocence mainly because they had not yet encountered temptation, since, as he says, “[i]n those unfledged days was my wife a girl; / Your precious self had not then crossed the eyes / Of my young playfellow” (I.ii.67-69, 76-80). It is apparent that this juvenile identification—and the revisiting of it with these new temptations present—is contributing to Leontes’ adult anxieties about his wife’s infidelity with his friend.

It is in the second scene of the play that the audience is exposed to the current relationship between the two kings, Hermione’s innocent and hospitable interactions between them, the violent rise of Leontes’ irrational jealousy, and the king’s interaction with his son in

² This kind of organic bonding recurs in Shakespeare’s work; see, for example, Helena in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (also in the context of accusing her closest friend of betrayal): “...So we grew together, [l]ike to a double cherry, seeming parted / But yet an union in partition; / Two lovely berries moulded on one stem / So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart” (III.ii.209-212).

thematic dialogue with all of these events. This scene offers a symphony of the play's various linguistic entanglements that relate to childhood and its tendencies towards imitation and play, as Leontes attempts to parse his own irrational jealousies and his responses to those closest to him—Polixenes, Hermione, and his son Mamillius.

The scene's complexity is grounded in Leontes' struggle with his ideas about childhood, and his problematic efforts to reconcile the past with the present (and ultimately, the future). Though Leontes is typically viewed as the jealous husband—like Othello, but without even an Iago to provoke him—it is also important to note that his earliest anxiety seems to spring not from his love of Hermione, but from the threat she poses to his sacred relationship with Polixenes, and her unwitting destruction of its innocence. The intimacy between the two men is clearly established in the play's opening scene and in Polixenes' conversation with Hermione; refusing requests that he extend his stay, Polixenes assures Leontes, “[t]here is no tongue that moves, none, none i' the world / So soon as yours could win me” (I.ii.20-21). After Hermione has, at her husband's behest, successfully persuaded Polixenes to stay, and she tells Leontes, “[h]e'll stay, my lord,” Leontes, oddly introspective, perhaps almost aside, replies, “At my request he would not” (I.ii.87). Since everyone—onstage and in the audience—already knows this, and since no one replies, the comment primarily communicates Leontes' own processing of the situation, which focuses not on Hermione, but on his own connection with Polixenes, and its having been superseded; this seems to imply that, though he will soon pursue the more conventional line of suspicion, it is in the loss of intimacy between himself and his childhood brother that the brunt of his hurt and feeling of betrayal truly lies. This is reiterated in his response to Polixenes' taking Hermione's proffered hand: “[t]o mingle friendship far is mingling bloods” (109). The line suggests progression towards sexual intimacy in its appeal to

contemporary understandings of physiology, but it also communicates the confusion Leontes feels as a result of the different and overlapping intimacies in his life. It is his friendship with Leontes which began as the mingled blood of twinned lambs and branching roots, and is now threatened by the very adult forces of sexuality and hospitality.

The structure of this scene also reflects the chaos of Leontes' efforts to understand and position himself in relation to who he once was; this seems to be the only real explanation of Mamillius' presence at this moment, and the nature of his interactions with his father. Mamillius is evidence for the argument that Shakespearean mimetic children allow for a wider spectrum of critical understanding of children in the plays as important dramatic figures, at once "pert and malapert," (Garber 30) and in Rutter's very apropos assessment, "[s]imultaneously the embodiment of the future the adult plans but knows he will not live to see and the nostalgic recollection of the adult's innocent past, . . . stubbornly material, getting in the adult's way. But they are also ghosts, hauntings" (xiv). It is particularly instructive to consider Mamillius, in his opening scene with his father, as both ghostlike, and stubbornly material; though staging could of course determine this more concretely one way or another, Mamillius, in Act I, sc ii, need not be present for anyone but his father. No one else speaks to him or even references his presence³. For Leontes (and for the audience), Mamillius represents at once innocence and the loss of that innocence; as shown below, Mamillius' physical features remind Leontes perplexingly of himself in innocence, and yet he is unable to disassociate him from Hermione—"My collop! Can thy dam?—may't be?—" (I.ii.137), and the fact that his very existence is an undeniable result of

³ Though the circumstances are certainly different, there does seem to be a sort of kinship between Hermione's response to Leontes' increasingly impassioned speech (I.ii.120-146) which is directed throughout to Mamillius, and that of Lady Macbeth to Macbeth's interaction with Banquo's ghost. Hermione's "He seems something unsettled," (I.ii.147) seems a kindly echo of Lady Macbeth's "his highness is not well"; this is only to suggest the surreal quality the text allows for Mamillius.

their adult interaction, which, we have seen, has been responsible for the destruction of his and Polixenes' juvenile intimacy.

It is, therefore, as Rutter's comment implies, precisely Mamillius' physicality that is of such distracting import to his father, in part because of persistent and varied questions of imitation, but also because of Leontes' attention to the physical. Leontes' anxiety about Hermione's loyalty and his son's legitimacy takes the form of a hyperconscious attention to and imagistic concern with the body, and more specifically, with the face (a motif whose dominance parallels that of birds in *Macbeth*). As Leontes' suspicion of his wife and friend and their "mingling bloods" mounts, he is aware of a "tremor cordis" in his own breast; he expresses the seemingly innocent appearance of Hermione's kindness towards Polixenes as the putting on of a "free face," derived from her "fertile bosom," and executed by "paddling palms and pinching fingers" (110-115). His own response to this "entertainment"—"My bosom likes it not, nor my brows!"—is likewise seated in his own body and face, but also begins to accentuate the persistent textual attention to brow and bosom (119-20). While Leontes' mention of brows in this exclamation does allude to the horns upon the brow of the cuckold (particularly in conjunction with analogy of the "mort 'o th' deer" in the preceding line), it is also representative of the play's larger concern with the brow as both distinctive facial feature, and outward representation of inward sensibility. This is particularly evident in the pairing here of the brow with the bosom, since the brow is the world's point of encounter with exterior representation of self, while the bosom suggests true interiority⁴. This image, as well as the interior/exterior division, continues through the scene; as Leontes struggles with the "infection of [his] brains," he notes also the

⁴ This is even reflected in their respective etymologies, with bosom giving a physical sense of enclosure, while the use of "front" for forehead or brow—somewhat antiquated in English (as in Shakespeare, *Othello*, I.iii.80, for example), but standard in French—indicates the status of the brow as point of representation (natural or feigned) of interior being to exterior environment.

“hard’ning of [his] brows” (I.ii.145-6). This does not go unnoticed by the perceptive Hermione, who observes that he appears to hold “a brow of much distraction”; Leontes replies that he is not angry, rather that “sometimes nature will betray its folly, / Its tenderness, and make itself a pastime / To harder bosoms!” (I.ii.148, 151-3).

The confusion Leontes feels here about interior and exterior, about the different intimacies present in the scene, and about his emotional responses to his own son, lead him abruptly to question Mamillius, “Art thou my boy?” (119-20). After Mamillius’ affirmative response, Leontes proceeds to call attention to his son’s nose, which he says “[t]hey say” is a “copy out of” his own; as his anxiety continues to rise, his interrogation and examination (“Art thou my calf?”) of Mamillius develop; he comments that the boy “want’st a rough pash and the shoots”—or cuckold’s horns, again—of his father, although “they say [the two] are / Almost as like as eggs. Women say so, / That will say anything. But were as false / As o’er-dyed blacks...” (127-132). In this exchange, Leontes confronts the reality of the fleshly imitation by children of their parents, and also introduces imagery which Mamillius, in a more performative imitation, will echo in the next scene. After grounding his anxieties firmly in the physical, and initiating the play’s ongoing brow/bosom dichotomy, Leontes marvels at the disorienting mirroring of himself in the specifically physical features of his much younger son: “[I]looking on the lines / Of my boy’s face, methought I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched...How like, methought, I then was to this kernal, / This squash, this gentleman” (153-55, 59-60). In Mamillius’ innocence Leontes sees a copy of his former Edenic self; his irrational anger is a response to his paralytic inability to view the past, present, and future as discrete moments.

In the play’s opening, there is a curious sequence of lines on the boyhood of Leontes and Polixenes; Camillo hopefully affirms their bond—“[t]he heavens continue their loves!”—to

which Archidamus responds, “I think there is not in the world either malice or matter to alter it. You have an unspeakable comfort of your young Prince Mamillius” (I.i.31-35). This seeming non-sequitur or abrupt change of subject, and the identification of Mamillius as a comfort, continues the inadvertent implication, begun by “branch” in the previous speech, of an imminent rupture in this childhood bond, and suggests that the young prince is somehow in enigmatic and inevitable relation to the split—that he may be a comfort, but that he may also somehow be the offending malice or matter. In spite of the romantic and pastoral nostalgia with which the childhood of Leontes and Polixenes is recounted, the relation to the real, current children in the text is not without the ambivalence frequently displayed towards mimetic children in literature. Polixenes describes his own son as “[n]ow my sworn friend and then mine enemy, / My parasite, my soldier, my statesman, all” (1.2.167-8). Mamillius, rather than serving as the “comfort” he is said to be in I.i, serves only as a vehicle for his father’s increasing agitation—and in ways specifically linked to the imitative and the performative, as detailed above. Even in dismissing him to the seeming innocuities of childhood, the repetition and multiple understandings of “play” in Leontes’ line “[g]o, play, boy, play. Thy mother plays, and I / Play too, but so disgraced a part, whose issue / Will hiss me to my grave” (II.ii.187-88) are indicative of the problematic inseparability of the playfulness and imitation of childhood, and Leontes’ own troubled adult circumstance; the line also once again shows that Leontes is unable to consider Mamillius as distinct from his mother (a recurring issue which seems to be supported by Mamillius’ name, derived from the Latin for breast).

Where Mamillius is, to his father in Act I, sc ii, a haunting shadow, he becomes in the following scene, for his mother, all too real. Besides representing a sort of realistic domestic disorder as addressed above—the pregnant mother exhausted with the performative antics of her

young son—this scene also allows Mamillius to literalize his function as mimetic child in his persistent echoing of his father’s language and anxieties. Where before his presence and status as a child allows Leontes to enact his own anxieties against a backdrop of his son, here Mamillius begins to perform his own importance to the play. This strange scene (similar in its oddity to the encounter between Lady Macduff and her son) poses Mamillius against his mother and the ladies who tend to him. In his youthful defiance of the ladies, Mamillius echoes his father’s language; he loves one of the nursemaids better, he says, but “[n]ot for because / [her] brows are blacker; yet black brows, they say, / Become some women best, so that there be not / Too much hair there, but in a semi circle, / Or a half-moon made with a pen” (I.ii.6-10). When asked who taught him this, Mamillius asserts his perceptive independence, claiming to have “learn’d...out of women’s faces” (II.ii.12). Mamillius, like a Shakespearean clown, or like a perceptive child, adopts and adapts his father’s rhetorical concern both with brows, and with the idea of women being “false / As o’er-dyed blacks” (I.ii.132). The echoing of his father’s images suggests the inherent mimetic nature of children, but by manipulating these images to suit his own playful purposes, and in his emphatic claim that he has not been taught, but has learned independently, Mamillius exhibits that dangerous and unsettling autonomy characteristic of the mimetic child.

Mamillius asserts his presence as a character in this scene in several distinct ways, each of which is essential to understanding the importance of children and childhood in Shakespeare, and for clarifying the figure of the mimetic child. He is at once realistically defiant, as a youth on the verge of adolescence, and unrealistic in his pert clownishness, as Pattison argues. It is also of great importance that his impertinent banter is in direct echoic relation to the anxieties his father established in the preceding scene, and which are significant thematics for the play as a whole. Finally, he closes out his performance—in the scene, and in the play, since this is the last the

audience will see of him—with storytelling, an essentially performative component of what it means to be a child.⁵ Perhaps most importantly, throughout, the audience is seeing Mamillius at play.

Mimetic Children and the figure of SHAKESPEARE!

There is a set of characteristics attributable to Shakespearean children that are essential to the consideration of the mimetic child, and of the progression of the child figure through the nineteenth century, as well as to understanding the logic of connecting Shakespeare the writer with children both in his books and reading them. These include: privileged insight, courage and precocity, cruelty, and the association of children with the capacity for creation (in both artistic and biological senses). The first of these—the notion of children as preternatural seers—is addressed above by Greenhalgh, but is also supported by Rousseau who, “emphasizing the child’s original innocence and spontaneity,... believes that children, not adults, possess the deepest insight into underlying reality” (Partee 6). Expressing what Richardson will call the “organic paradigm” for representing children, Rousseau writes in *Emile*, “[e]verything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man” (37). The way we might apply this “blank slate” or “empty cabinet” idea to both children and Shakespeare will be explored further in the “Family Shakespeares” chapter of this work, by looking at the relationships between the corruption (or at least shaping) of each by society (Shakespeare in adaptation and production, as well as in biographical constructions, and children in education, recreation, and social regulation) and the subsequent urges to fix whatever is wrong with both.

⁵ Discussion of storytelling in specific relation to female creative power both in and concerning Shakespeare’s plays, is found in all my later chapters.

In Shakespeare we are also faced with the question of precocity, which is very significant in nineteenth-century understandings of childhood, as well as in critical studies by Marah Gubar, Carolyn Steedman, and others. Partee sees the precocity of Shakespearean children as stemming possibly from the author's "personal recollection of his own aptitude or simply from observation of children nurtured by a demanding society and its rigorous educational system" (11). I will return to this question of precocity, as well as its connection to performance, later chapters, where it will enhance discussion of the theatrical phenomenon of child actors, from Shakespeare's time into the Victorian age, as players on the stage of a "demanding society."

Whether it is an innate trait or a result of the demands of society, Partee notes that Shakespeare, while "[b]asically sympathetic to the innocence and vulnerability of children, recognizes in them an element of cruelty" (11). Though Partee's examples of this in Shakespeare are somewhat limited, this cruelty is indeed present, both in Shakespeare, and increasingly in later literary representations of children. The flipside of the innocent power which accompanies the child's privileged access to nature and the imaginative, this capacity for cruelty is also frequently and significantly linked to notions of performativity.

Finally, as Anthony Dawson acknowledges, "we all know about Shakespeare's almost obsessive interest in family" (89), and we see in *Macbeth*, *The Winter's Tale*, of course in the history plays, and in numerous other works, how Shakespeare uses children—both as characters, and as imagery—to represent anxieties about reproduction and continuation. This is true in terms of characterization—"the typical Shakespearean notion that children mirror their parents and thus provide not only a comfort in this world, but also a hope for immortality after death" (Partee 54)—but there is also often a link made between this kind of creative potential, and artistic generative power.

While there are of course many ways to read any literary character, these particular considerations of Shakespeare's children are significant in that they introduce a way of thinking about children, performance, and Shakespeare that connects the plays themselves with later adaptations and appropriations of both the works and their author. My introduction briefly discusses the process by which the figure of the child became established in the eighteenth century and firmly grounded in the literary and cultural consciousness in the nineteenth. Having considered the performative importance of the children in Shakespeare's plays, and with the intention of continuing to argue for the value of attention to adaptations of Shakespeare's work for children, I will here address significant similarities between the mimetic child and Shakespeare himself, both as he is represented in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as his works begin to be appropriated. While it began much earlier, Shakespeare's rise to the status of cultural icon is broadly contemporaneous with the establishment of the child as a distinct entity, and thematically parallel to the concept of the mimetic child.

I have already addressed the intriguing development, from the late eighteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, in the conception of children—as represented in literature, and as intended readers—as sources of both admiration and anxiety, an ambivalence rooted in that ancient antitheatrical insecurity about the performative, and productive of the impulse to control and tame. As in the case of audience reception of Shakespeare's children as described by Garber—disquieting, odd, their exits a relief—the performative is fearsome. The same sources of power attributed to the mimetic child and discussed in the opening chapter (tendency to play, imitative and representational impulse and skill, and imaginative superiority) allow for this connection of the developing child figure to the also evolving cultural status of Shakespeare and his works. Though there is almost certainly more idolizing praise and less anxiety about

Shakespeare, parallel ambivalence is apparent in adaptations of his work, which control the dauntingly powerful imagination of this “dauntless child,”⁶ while using him to direct the mimetic urges of young readers. Literary representation, educational concepts, and adaptations can be read productively as attempts to harness or redirect these creative mimetic energies through more conventional and manageable channels.

After his introduction to the European public in 1762, Rousseau’s *Emile* and his education became monuments of the innate goodness of man, naturally embodied in the child, and the various precautions that might be taken to preserve that purity from the disfiguring corruption of man and his social institutions⁷. Seven years later, another noble savage secured in David Garrick’s ode the “lov’d, rever’d, immortal name! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE! SHAKESPEARE!” (Garrick 252). It is not coincidental that the same period which negotiates the development of the status of this “god of our idolatry” also sees a similarly reverent attention to the figure of the child, whose role in society must also be determined, dictated, and represented. The similarities between the idea of the child, and the idea of the national poet, which allow both to assume a cult-like following over the course of the nineteenth century are grounded in notions of play, representation, imagination, and thus, ultimately, of power. Where there is this kind of power, particularly when rooted as it is in areas of privileged creative access, there is anxiety, and consequent action to resolve that anxiety by gaining control.

The two are also linked by their respective status as gradually evolving culturally constructed figures; both are consistently referred to (even here, to some extent) as a general

⁶ Thomas Gray, “The Progress of Poesy” (1757).

⁷ Rousseau’s own’ conflicted relation to the theater, his recognition in his “Letter to D’Alembert” of its potential for moral corruption, seems apropos here. He writes of *Emile*, “I take him to the theater to study not morals but taste, for it is here that taste reveals itself to those who know how to reflect. ‘Leave aside precepts and morality,’ I would say to him, ‘it is not here that they are to be learned.’ The theater is not made for truth. It is made to delight, to entertain men. There is no school in which one learns so well the art of pleasing men and of interesting the human heart.” (*Emile*, Book IV, 344)

idea, a broad concept which attempts somehow to account for an impossibly vast array of historical and cultural understandings. It should also be noted, though, that both children and Shakespeare have been able to maintain in the face of this figuring a sort of purity which consequently allows them to be more powerful. The increased power of the child figure has already been noted in, for example, the increasing availability of “games, toys, books, and apparel designed specifically for children” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Richardson 9), but this power is amplified by the fact that though children are seen as generalized figures, their innate innocent simplicity resists any complicated reactions which readers might have to that figuring. Robert Pattison addresses this in his discussion of children as figurative; a reader encountering a child, he writes, will be tempted to say, “‘Well, here is something from real life, not a figure, but just what it seems to be—a child.’ The fact that the child is not regarded as a figure or image gives it added potency, for the truth is that this particular depiction of reality is relatively new to English literature” (45). Shakespeare, of course, maintains a mystifying singularity despite the fact that Shakespeare only became SHAKESPEARE gradually and by a series of complex cultural interactions. “Certainly something happened during the century between the 1660s and the 1760s,” Michael Dobson writes, to engender “Bardolatry, . . . something which indeed had the effect of ‘authorizing’ Shakespeare—both in the sense of promoting (‘puffing’) his plays to the status of canonical texts, and, concurrently, of canonizing Shakespeare himself as the paradigmatic figure of literary authority (making him into ‘the bard’, a ‘hero’)” (1).

Further, Shakespeare, like children in the period, is viewed in different and often contrasting ways—now as a wild and pure child of nature, now as a national patriarch. Robert Shaughnessy suggests a connection between “[t]he emergence of a conception of Shakespeare as

a ‘child of nature’ towards the end of the eighteenth century, the formation of a new market of juvenile readers of Shakespeare, and the increasing importance of children and childhood more generally within the cultural imaginary”(2-3). Besides addressing the importance of consumerism to understandings of both Shakespeare and childhood in the period, and recognizing the surge in the cultural significance of children, this combination of factors by Shaughnessy calls necessary attention to the idea of nature in all of this. Nature—one touch of which makes the whole world kin⁸—is of course a fraught and ever-present concept in Shakespeare’s works, encompassing as it does everything from the Forest of Arden to the milk of human kindness. The concept of Nature, especially as depicted and frequently personified by Shakespeare, unites mankind and the earth on which he lives; it also serves, in these nineteenth-century incarnations, as a point of communion between Shakespeare—child, student, instrument of nature—and the figure of the child, in its perceived closeness with and function as a representation of the purity of the natural world. It is at least in part in this close association with nature that Shakespeare (both in his art, and in the conceptions of him) and children (in their uncorrupted states, in that supernatural access they are often depicted as seeming to possess, and in their tendency towards imitation) simultaneously assume both innocence and power; both are holding, “as ‘twere the mirror up to nature”⁹ (which is of course, the purpose of playing).

This simultaneity is consistently evident in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth- century representations of Shakespeare—usually as a child—in privileged communion with nature. Even a “fragment” like Adam Muller’s, which describes Shakespeare as “liv[ing] in the midst of [Germanic life] like a child, sleep[ing] curled up in a flower like the elves” (Bate 83), manages,

⁸ *Troilus and Cressida*, III.iii

⁹ *Hamlet*, III.ii

while merging the figure of Shakespeare with the imagery of his works, to convey the combination of vulnerability and disempowerment with a sort of mysterious independence and supernatural agency (with nature ever-present) which will come to be associated with children. Thomas Gray's "Progress of Poesy" (1757) traces the migration of the "sad Nine" muses from Italy to the "sea-encircled coast" of "Albion":

Far from the sun and summer-gale,
 In thy green lap was Nature's darling laid,
 What time, where lucid Avon strayed,
 To him the mighty Mother did unveil
 Her awful face: the dauntless child
 Stretched forth his little arms and smiled.
 This pencil take, (she said) whose colours clear
 Richly paint the vernal year:
 Thine too these golden keys, immortal boy!
 This can unlock the gates of joy;
 Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
 Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears. (III.i.83-94)

In the "awful face" of Nature, the "immortal boy" remains undaunted; though vulnerable, laying in the lap of Albion, stretching his "little arms," he is in fact empowered with a pencil that paints the seasons, and keys which unlock human emotion—privileged juvenile access to all realms of the natural.

Though the image of the boy Shakespeare in conference with a maternal nature was a popular one in both writing and art (as the discussion below of several images will show), the idea of the "child of nature" was often employed to communicate Shakespeare's roughness as a poet, his uncouth tendencies and disregard of classical rules. It is an epithet which frequently conveys a fascinating ambivalence, a display of simultaneous disdain and admiration. Coleridge once lectured on an eighteenth-century passage "in which it was said that [Shakespeare] seemed a great man in his own despite, and that where he was not much above all other writers, that he was equally below them: that he was a man of an irregular mind; that he was a sort of *lusus*

naturae and at other times was called a mere child of nature” (Foakes 57). John Payne Collier, transcribing Coleridge, writes that this kind of language is representative of the viewpoints of proponents of classical theater who, “not having courage to deny the justness of that model, or the propriety of those rules, have asserted that Shakespeare was a sort of irregular writer, that he was tasteful but incorrect, and that he was a mere child of nature” (Foakes 57). Foakes, the editor of the text of the lectures, clarifies that the passage above ought to be attributed to Pope, and not Theobald as Collier had conjectured. In his “Epistle to Augustus” Pope writes that Shakespeare “with all these great excellencies...has almost as many great defects; and that as he has certainly written better, so perhaps written worse, than any other” (57). It is Collier’s opinion that “calling Shakespeare a child of nature seems...his highest praise as applied to a Dramatic poet whose object is or ought to be to represent only nature (Foakes 57). Collier’s interjection depends, however, on a particular understanding of nature in this context which is not necessarily in line with either Pope’s or Coleridge’s meaning.

Pope’s treatment of Shakespeare is representative of the tendency among his contemporaries and immediate successors to “praise and blame with alternate breath, and to point out deformities, manifold and monstrous, in this bewitching but untutored and half savage child of nature” (White cc-cci). His eighteenth-century conception of this “child of nature” is monstrous, deformed, irregular, savage; the documentation of this stage in Shakespeare’s career as a child of nature is important because it then highlights the development of his reputation in the shift from writers like Pope to the Romantics, for whom this association with untamed nature, and the related childlike way of seeing, will make Shakespeare all the more sacred.

There are a number of visual representations from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, some of which are direct illustrations of Gray’s ode, but some of which give varying

interpretations of a similar scenario—the child Shakespeare in position of mentee to the feminine (and frequently maternal) figure of Nature. Besides generally supporting the simultaneousness of weakness and power which defines both children and Shakespeare in the period, these works also raise other interesting questions about both. *Nature's Gifts to Shakespeare*¹⁰ is explicitly indebted to Gray, including as it does a script caption which reads “Thine be these golden keys, immortal boy”; curiously, though, rather than unveiling an “awful face,” Nutter’s Nature, with her flowing curls and soft gaze, recalls another “mighty Mother,” the cherubic child another immortal boy, in the inescapable invoking of artistic representations of Madonna and Child; what must be her veil is even arranged as a halo of sorts. The child, draped in robes, stares with admiring intent at the maternal figure of Nature as she offers him the keys. In this depiction we can recognize what Susanne Greenhalgh calls the “‘sacralization’ of the child,” (119) as well as the sacralization of Shakespeare which occur historically with a striking similarity. The convergence is of particular importance here, since this sacralization is identified as a direct result of “[t]he Romantic idealization of childhood, as not only a state of innocence but one of special insight into the workings of nature and the creative imagination” (Greenhalgh 119). Such idealization—the granting of a special kind of power linked to creativity, communion with nature, and the idea of the enhanced perspective of the innocent—is equally applicable to children and to Shakespeare in the period.

George Romney’s 1799 painting *The Infant Shakespeare Attended by Nature and the Passions* (copperplate engraving by Benjamin Smith for *The Boydell Shakespeare Prints*) is accompanied by the descriptive subtitle which explains that “Nature is represented with her face unveiled to her favourite Child, who is placed between Joy and Sorrow. On the right of Nature

¹⁰ S. Shelley, pinxt; William Nutter, sculpt, late eighteenth century. All images accessed through the Folger Shakespeare Library’s digital archive.

are Love, Hatred & Jealousy; on her left hand, Anger, Envy, & Fear.” Romney’s painting distinguishes itself from Grey’s ode in its depiction of the immortal boy, of nature, and in the presence of specific human passions. Romney’s infant Shakespeare is no mewling cherub, but a disquietingly adult miniaturization of the idolized national poet; unruffled by the onslaught of attentions from the various passions (anger, hatred, and jealousy seem most directly fixated on the infant), he seems to channel the intensity of their gazes outward, engaging the viewer with his own, as well as with his upright naked posture, and the relaxed confidence with which he grasps Joy’s wand. This child, like those of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literary works, is at once earthly and ethereal, vulnerable and powerful, and is in close communion with the spirit of nature and her presence in the passions of mankind.

Another print, roughly contemporaneous (1791), which depicts *Nature Leading the Boy Shakespeare*, is more classical in style than the first and suggests in its enlightenment sensibility another important aspect of the relationship between Shakespeare, nature, and childhood. Nature, dressed like a pagan goddess or dryad in flowing garments and with flowers wreathing her head, is teacher more than mother, giver of knowledge rather than of gifts. She wears a look of intelligent amusement and pride as she leads the boy Shakespeare by the hand. Shakespeare, by contrast, is not a babe in arms, but a gallant schoolboy, with pointed shoes, breeches, tie, and sash. He observes his mentor intently, listening, learning, conversing. In the middle ground stand a number of statues representing figures divine and human, like those who people the plays of Shakespeare; there is water visible in the background, and across the water, the city—civilization. While the relationship here is still one of special communion, it is also one which privileges education, and which situates Shakespeare, even in his natural innocence, in relation to society and its institutions. Even as Shakespeare is tutored by nature, his works, at the time of

this print, are becoming significant components of the British juvenile curriculum, particularly with the publication of works which extracted passages from the works for use in educational settings.

No such trappings of civilization are present in a fourth print, dated to the early nineteenth century, which depicts *Shakespeare as a boy with allegorical figure representing nature*; Shakespeare here is a young boy, and kneels completely naked at the feet of the nature figure; unlike the expressive faces of the figures described above, this nature's visage mirrors the theatrical masks—a Dionysian comedy, with ivy and pan pipes, and tragedy, with a sword—which flank the frame of the print. She creates a sort of cave by spreading her veil wide above her outstretched arms, and presents to the young Shakespeare her bare chest, upon which there are two sets of breasts, presumably indicative of her capacity for nurturing. There is something ancient, raw, and savage in this depiction, something which is also observed in contemporary discussions of Shakespeare's work, and of the uneducated child. The background shows only natural scenery, foliage and sky, with the curious disruption of the cheeky swan gliding slyly into the bottom right-hand corner of the vignette, perhaps linking Shakespeare's primal connection to nature to his commercial future as the "swan of Avon," and as a subject of his monarch, as it is popularly believed that all swans on the Thames belong to the reigning monarch.

While the proliferation of artistic depictions of the boy Shakespeare communing with the figure of Nature clearly supports the argument for the significance of the intersection between Shakespeare, nature, childhood, and mimetic representation, it is in the specifics of the various conceptions of Shakespeare in childhood articulated by these late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artworks that the threads which comprise this work's arguments about the mimetic child emerge. These prints—just a limited sampling from many available in the

period—provide evidence for the complexity of these intersections, and the gravity of the various arenas—religion, education, classicism—in which they play a part. Shakespeare, as a child, is assigned the role of mediator between the world of nature, of divinity, of the classics, of human passion—and the world of the everyday. In these representations are the idealized view of the child which informs Romantic works, and which will be called into question throughout my chapters, and the suggestion of savagery and even cruelty which accompany it. The images also support the notion of children in general and Shakespeare in particular as empowered by their imaginations, and as existing in a liminal space which is nonetheless bounded by social realities which they then actively interpret. This privileged way of seeing, described above by Susanne Greenhalgh, which renders children at once innocent and not, has also appeared in the discussion of the concept of the mimetic child. Quoting Judith Plotz, Greenhalgh recognizes “[t]he Romantic fusion of images of children as ‘*originary* models of ideal nature, unselfconscious and self-sufficient models of natural beauty, and irrepressible engines of vital power’ with constructions of Shakespeare as a unique embodiment of sublime Nature” (123). These visual images, then, illustrate all of the important tendencies which characterize the mimetic child in its ongoing expression of this fusion and emphasize its grounding in the Shakespearean tradition—both the children of the plays, and the association of the child figure with Shakespeare himself. In this confluence of ideas they also prepare for the multi-generic extension of the argument through the twentieth century, as the boy Shakespeare is led by nature into juvenile adaptations, nineteenth-century novels, and onto the Victorian stage, where he will encounter other children like himself reading, being read, navigating boundaries, and acting on stage, but all and always through imitative performance.

Images



1. *Nature's gifts to Shakspeare.* S. Shelley, pinxt; William Nutter, sculpt. Late 18th c.



2. *Nature leading the boy Shakespeare*. C.R. Ryley. Published by Bellamy & Roberts, 1791.



3. *Shakespeare Attended by Nature and the Passions*. George Romney. Copperplate engraving by Benjamin Smith for *The Boydell Shakespeare Prints*. Full title of plate 2, volume I: *The Infant Shakespeare attended by Nature and the Passions*. Additional subtitle: *Nature is represented with her face unveiled to her favourite Child, who is placed between Joy and Sorrow. On the right of Nature are Love, Hatred & Jealousy; on her left hand, Anger, Envy, & Fear*. 1799.



4. Shakespeare as a boy with allegorical figure representing nature. Early 19th c

Chapter Two: “You taught me language”: Family Shakespeares

The Tempest opens with a storm; the calm which follows is a scene of paternal storytelling and juvenile (and audience) attendance. That interweaving of familial relations with the prioritizing of education and mastery of language continues throughout the play, more than in any other Shakespearean work, and extends to the idea of parents or authority figures in control of children’s stories. The play also offers in Miranda and Caliban characters whose roles and import are determined by their mimetic (in the latter case, monstrously so¹¹) tendencies. The nineteenth century’s best-known adaptations of Shakespeare for children—Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales from Shakespeare*, and the Bowdlers’ *Family Shakespeare*, both first published in 1807—each begin with *The Tempest*. Certainly the play has fairy tale appeal, with its familiar figures of father/ruler, fairy, monster, ingénue, and handsome prince, and seems likely to catch and keep children’s attention with its relative brevity and simplicity of action; the choice to open the collections with Shakespeare’s great farewell to the theater, though—even, in the *Tales*, offering as the child reader’s introduction to the “matchless image” (Lamb v) of Shakespeare the frontispiece illustration of a godlike Prospero shielding an anxious Miranda from the brave new world (the storm is visible in the background)—is also grounded in the play’s interrelated thematic treatments of education, parental control, and performance.

Where the previous chapter links Shakespeare to children first through the figure of the mimetic child as character, and then in a larger historical framework, the present chapter considers the connection between nineteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare for juvenile (or in some broader cases, family or female) readers and the argument about mimesis, children, and Shakespeare. As parents begin to assume the essential role of intermediary between Shakespeare

¹¹ See Chapter Three for more on mimetic monstrosity.

as published material and child as consumer, their roles and status as performers demand attention. Mimetic children and their performing parents have been shown to recur in Shakespeare's plays. But the concepts which define them as figures also govern the processes and products of nineteenth-century editors and adaptors working with the plays, since the process of adaptation complicates relations to originators in ways which often seem to mirror or be mirrored by actual parental relations. Their adaptations are developed in the progenitory shadows of their own parents as well as of Shakespeare, and come to be seen as a sort of creative offspring. Thus these adapted works, marketed to children and their parents in a period so significant in the development of ideas about parenting, essentialize centuries of conceptual intersection between parents and children, Shakespeare, and performativity.

To trace this progression and argue for the importance of considering the mimetic child (and relatedly, later, performing Shakespearean women), I begin by reading moments of juvenile mimetic agency and performances of parental control in *The Tempest*, proceeding to consider the textual processes by which these instances are subdued and promoted, respectively, in the Lambs' and Bowdler's adaptations. Their modifications call attention to their own status in their adaptive practices as mimetic children with both Shakespeare and their own actual parents as progenitory models. Their texts also betray an anxiety about female creative potential which is parallel in its sources and modes of address to the discomfort traced throughout this dissertation towards mimetic children and the theater more broadly. The presence of this unease, and its origins in the mimetic child and juvenile adaptation, lead naturally to a discussion of gender and storytelling, and to the closure of the chapter with attention to recontextualizations by Anna Jameson and Mary Cowden Clarke of Shakespearean heroines. These adaptations rely upon

performative modes and creative agency to liberate female characters—and by extension, “domestic” readers—from restrictive patriarchal structures and adaptive practices.

Lie There, My Art: Subduing the Mimetic Child

The Lambs, like Prospero, begin not with the dramatic tale of the shipwreck, but with a basic setting of the scene followed by the necessary background exposition; they identify Prospero and Miranda as the “only inhabitants” of a “certain island in the sea” (1). This Miranda came to the island “so young, that she had no memory of having seen any other human face than her father’s” (1). The effect of this opening is an emphasis on the isolation of Prospero and Miranda, and the dominance of his presence in her life, highlighted by the image of his looming, disembodied face as the only one Miranda has seen (though in Shakespeare she remembers “four or five women” who had tended her as a child [I.ii.47]). The play’s original opening offers not only a glimpse of the inhabitants of the brave new world, but also an establishment and upending of the conventional social hierarchy, with the noblemen literally beneath the sailors whose superior skills at sea make them more valuable within the atmospheric pull of the island (though Prospero is of course master of the elements and therefore the ultimate controller). The Lambs’ adaptation of Prospero and Miranda’s initial interaction attempts to insure that this paternal hegemony is maintained; in doing so, they simplify Miranda’s already under-complicated character and limit her access to power within the play—particularly those sources of power which have their roots in her still childlike nature and its mimetic tendencies. Susan Wolfson notes that the “decision to begin [the] tale by discrediting Miranda’s memory has the effect both of granting Prospero’s account the authority of neutral interpretation and of situating Miranda in relation to that authority” (29). Although the Lambs’ approach is generally encouraging of imaginative play and grounded in Romantic ideals, it becomes clear nonetheless that the success

of their particular tale is dependent upon the maintenance of a clear and disciplined relationship between parent and child,¹² as well as, in this case, between teacher and student—and, further, between actor and audience.

In the Lambs' version of *The Tempest* the reader is simply told of the storm after having been informed that Prospero can control the wind and waves by means of his various spirit servants; it is then reported that Prospero "shewed his daughter a fine large ship, which he told her was full of living beings like themselves" (3). This setup is in interesting contrast to the original, in which Miranda approaches Prospero independently, opening the scene with a striking monologue, the assertiveness and lyrical potency of which will not recur in any of Miranda's speeches to follow. The distinction between Prospero *showing* Miranda the ship and *telling* her who is inside, and her independent observation of the wreck and spontaneous imagination of the "noble creature" who was "no doubt" within is significant (I.ii.7), both because it continues to establish Prospero's complete control as father, teacher, and setter of scenes, and because it highlights the Lambs' excision (or at least minimization of) Miranda's imaginative pertness and budding independence.

Miranda's original first sentence is an imperative directed at her father: "If by your art, my dearest father / You have put the wild waters in this roar, allay them" (I.ii.1-2). In one sentence, she identifies the source of Prospero's power and asks not for pity, as in the Lambs' adaptation, but commands him, albeit respectfully, to cease the use of his power. Her speech is book-ended with the harnessing of natural imagery in a sort of hereditary poetical echo of her father's abilities, summoning in her efforts to persuade her father to allay the storm the

¹² Later in this same scene, Miranda begs her father to "make not to rash a trial of" Ferdinand; Prospero, playing the role of angry father replies, "What, I say, / my foot my tutor?" (I.ii.472-3), situating the importance of maintaining proper authoritative familial relationships in the logic of the physical body.

“sky...pour[ing] down stinking pitch,” and the sea “swallow[ing]” the ship and the “fraughting souls within her” (I.ii.3, 12-13). In both versions, Miranda expresses a wish to sink the sea within the earth (perhaps a subsuming of her father’s elemental control with her own more earthly grace, feted by Ceres in her wedding masque, and suggested by the play’s conclusion of Prospero’s disempowerment by burying), but in the original the conditional she offers is: “had I been a god of any power,” (I.ii.10) where the Lambs downgrade (or perhaps humanize) her further, adapting her line to the helpless “if I had power” (2). This simplification of Miranda renders her at once less imaginative and more obedient, and because godlike powers in *The Tempest* tend to find creative, performative outlets (like the great spectacle of the opening storm) seems also to target specifically her innate mimetic tendencies.

In *The Tempest*, parent-child affection is couched early on in terms of education, specifically language learning. The opening exchange between Prospero and Miranda, while providing necessary background information for the audience, also establishes the trinity of identity which characterizes Prospero in his relation to Miranda; he is storyteller, teacher, and father. All of these can ultimately be seen as subdivisions of his role in the play’s larger context of supreme artist figure, but in this moment, they contend with one another for supremacy, and father seems to come in last.

Prospero’s role of harsh taskmaster is in tense cooperation with that of solipsistic raconteur, since his pedagogical confidence is continually undermined by his vocalizations of anxiety surrounding Miranda’s focus on him. As he weaves his tale, he repeatedly demands his daughter’s seemingly already rapt attention. Miranda listens obediently to her father’s story (although she has prefaced her listening with the profession that “More to know / Did never meddle with [her] thoughts” [I.ii.21-22]), and though she is attentive and responds as if on cue,

she is barraged by Prospero's entirely unprovoked questioning and assessment of her submission in constant demands—"Dost thou attend me," "Dost thou hear," "mark me"—and accusations: "Thou attend'st not" (I.ii.78,87,106,88). The anxiety expressed in these recurring comments and resurfacing in the father-daughter exchanges throughout the play is replaced by the Lambs with supreme narrative (and parental) authority through their omission of all such questions and commands. A similar translation appears in Prospero's response to Miranda's asking why they were not destroyed rather than exiled; originally "Well demanded, wench: / My tale provokes that question. Dear, they durst not" (I.ii.139-140), the lines are adjusted by the Lambs to " 'My child,' answered her father, 'they durst not' (5). By omitting the compliment, and Prospero's need to connect her admirably active listening to his own storytelling prowess, as well as replacing the warm "Dear" with the still affectionate but more hierarchical and patronizing "My child," the adaptation continues to undermine Miranda's creative independence and reaffirm Prospero's narrative authority.

Prospero begins his narrative with the "once upon a time"-style conventional temporal orientation "[t]welve year since" (repeated twice)," before introducing the story's protagonist, telling Miranda that her "father was the Duke of Milan and / A prince of power" (I.ii.54-55). This construction allows for the complex establishment of a *dramatis personae* of Prospero; having as teacher secured Miranda's attention, and relied upon narrative conventions to identify himself as storyteller, he now evades fixed subjectivity by outlining further castings of himself in the roles of Miranda's father, Duke of Milan, and "prince of power"—a somewhat vague

position that he was still inclined to articulate in order to separate himself further into distinct and empowered roles, all of which are dependent upon performance.¹³

Miranda is defined in large part by her innocence, often represented by her severely limited experience with men (of her immediate attraction to Ferdinand, Prospero tells Miranda “thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he, / Having seen but him and Caliban” [I.ii.482-3]). The naïvete embedded in her response to Prospero’s multiplicitous narrative self-definition—“Sir, are you not my father?”—suggests an inability to reconcile her own limited worldview with the expansiveness of narrative convention (I.ii.55). However, it is also an inadvertent challenge of Prospero’s authority—narrative, performative, and paternal. Like her opening demand for mercy, Miranda’s wide-eyed interjection is an assertion of her eager burgeoning imaginative fecundity, and is exemplary of the kind of barbed innocence characteristic of her, and of mimetic children more generally. Her question is mimetic in its adoption of his rhetorical strategy of separating his fictionalized identities from his immediate self; in its suggestion of an entirely alternative story, though (that of Miranda’s *real* father), just as Prospero is attempting to secure the foundations of his own, and its unintentional implication of his cuckoldry, it is exemplary of the kind of threatening imaginative capacity inherent to the mimetic child. Prospero’s reply is circuitous and vaguely sardonic: “thy mother was a piece of virtue and she said thou was’t my daughter” (I.ii.56-57). It also attempts to take control of Miranda’s mimetic pertness and calling into question of his paternity, and in doing so, introduces the notion of female creative authority, both biological and concerning narrative verisimilitude.

¹³ The Lambs’ tale simplifies this characterization, and omits entirely the complicated exchange which follows in Prospero’s simple statement, “Twelve years ago, Miranda...I was Duke of Milan, and you were a princess and my only heir” (4).

Prospero's relation to Miranda, affectionate though it may be, is more characteristic of a teacher's to a student than of a father's to his daughter; he reminds her "here / Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit / Than other princesses can that have more time / For vainer hours and tutors not so careful" (I.ii.172-5). Throughout his exposition, Prospero employs the catechistic measures of a stern schoolteacher; in a comment which is echoed in a later line to Caliban, he addresses Miranda: "my daughter, who / Art ignorant of what thou art," and as he prepares to inform her he commands that she "[o]bey and be attentive," then proceeds to test her, asking "Canst thou remember / A time before we came unto this cell?" (I.ii.17-18, 38-40). When she replies in the affirmative, he is aggressively skeptical, demanding that she recite specifics: "[b]y what? by any other house or person? Of any thing the image tell me that / Hath kept with thy remembrance" (I.ii.42-44). Even as he proceeds, he continues to make points in the form of presenting Miranda with analytical assignments, as: "[m]ark his condition and the event; then tell me / If this might be a brother" (I.ii.117-8).

Miranda's response to this particular directional confirms a number of important things about this scene, including her status as a Shakespearean mimetic child, and the general tendency of this figure to reflect the larger thematic concerns of a work. She comments, "I should sin / to think but nobly of my grandmother. / Good wombs have borne bad sons" (I.ii.117-119). In its pious invocations of nobility and avoiding sin, and in Miranda's tendency to think the best of everyone, the response confirms her status as an innocent; but it is also significant that it is a logical, structural, and thematic mimetic echo of Prospero's earlier answer to her questioning his paternity. Again, a familial relation is called into question, and again the conclusion is reached by a logical path of assessing of feminine virtue and summoning images of women's reproductive capabilities. That this path leads to truth—yes, he is in fact her father, and yes, it

might be a brother, albeit a bad one—and that Miranda builds upon Prospero’s initial structure in her strikingly anatomical and somewhat unsettling synecdochial characterization of her grandmother as a “good womb,” indicates a convergence in the play of truth, family, and mimetic response with independent development and female creative potential.

Consideration of the Lambs’ and the Bowdlers’ adaptive treatments of these passages confirms that this convergence is not isolated or incidental, but in fact integral to the play in ways that are of particular interest in the analysis of nineteenth-century adaptation. Thomas and Henrietta Bowdler’s *The Family Shakespeare*, first published in 1807, “endeavor[s] to remove every thing that could give just offence to the religious and virtuous mind” or even “raise a blush on the cheek of modesty” (vii). Although the Bowdlers have become notorious for their censorship, Thomas himself recognizes early on the problem of his attackers not knowing his work well, and comments defensively in response to those readers who criticize the text without having examined it, that “to [him]self it appears that very few instances will be found in which the reader will have any cause to regret the loss of the words that have been omitted” (viii-ix). Critical reception of the text, including those somewhat rare instances where claims about the adaptation are actually grounded in textual readings of it, is discussed further below. One important effect of the Bowdlers’ expurgations, though, when the text is examined as he would have it be, is that they call attention to the concentrations of Shakespeare’s use of “improper” language or material in the various plays, and therefore suggest that that which has been removed is in fact integral to larger thematic workings of the original plays. The suggestion of certain scenes as extraneous, and the close reading of the way the Bowdlers deal with what they deem liable to offend or embarrass is valuable less as a means of judging Bowdler or his society, and more as a kind of focused lens through which to re-see Shakespeare. In *Reinventing*

Shakespeare, Gary Taylor writes that “the nineteenth century sawed Shakespeare in two. The childlike Shakespeare of Lamb and Bowdler emphasized, by contrast, the dangerous sexual adult of the unexpurgated texts” (210).

The emphasis, however, falls on more than just a generalized idea of sexuality. Examination of the Bowdlers’ texts tends to be revealing in two significant ways; as addressed above, collective assessment of omitted material emphasizes its thematic importance, but also, the relationship between that which has been removed, and that which has been deemed suitable often calls attention to some important tendencies of the Bowdlers’ project. They make only two significant changes to Act I, scene ii. In Prospero’s “well demanded, wench,” “wench” is emended to “girl”—a small adjustment, but one which softens and paternalizes the compliment. The second change, more pertinent to the argument at hand, is the omission of Miranda’s line “Good wombs have borne bad sons.” Presumably, this was deemed inappropriate because of its suggestion of the processes of conception and delivery, and perhaps because of the intimacy of the word “womb”; what’s especially remarkable about the precise editing, though, is that the two lines which precede this one remain untouched. Thus the potentially inappropriate reference to her grandmother’s virtue, and indirectly to her having been legitimately impregnated by the father shared by Prospero and Antonio still stands (or else the comment reads nonsensically).

These excisions therefore demonstrate an aversion which will extend throughout the play—not only to female sexuality, but to notions of corporeality (consistently female, and occasionally male as well), and to language connected with birth, reproduction, and fertility. Certainly, these concepts are often directly traceable to the act of sexual intercourse which leads to female reproduction, and their impropriety is therefore clear, but the Bowdlers’ editing often seems to point somewhere beyond this, particularly in situations where the language being

employed is a metaphor for something entirely other, as with the reference in *The Tempest*, omitted by Bowdler, to the sinking ship as an “unstaunched wench” (I.i.48-9). This excursive tendency (also observable in *Othello*—Iago’s muse is no longer permitted to labor, nor to deliver—and other adaptations) suggests a general lack of comfort with discussion of female (re)productivity, especially significant in light of views articulated in the work’s preface of women as limited in their education, and therefore, presumably, in their creative potential.

Because the Bowdlers edits are in fact somewhat minimal, their adaptation still allows for the play’s original focus (emphasized in the Lambs’ version) on the prioritizing of education, specifically linguistic education. Innate to the play and to Prospero as character (teacher, teller of tales, and [finally?] father), this also pervades the relationship between Prospero and his mooncalf, Caliban—his aborted attempt at a civilized son. “When thou cam’st first,” Caliban reminds Prospero, “Thou strok’st and made much of me, wouldst give me / Water with berries in’t, and teach me how / To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee...” (I.ii.335-9). Besides the most basic necessities of shelter and water, Prospero provides for Caliban affection in the form of the teaching of words. In a subsequent line attributed sometimes to Miranda and sometimes to her father, one of Caliban’s benevolent teachers echoes his own memory, recalling that out of pity¹⁴, (s)he “[t]ook pains to make [him] speak, taught [him] each hour / One thing or other”; the direct address continues “thou didst not, savage, / Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish, [and] I endow’d thy purposes / With words that made them known” (I.ii.357-361). The assertion that in not knowing language Caliban does not know his own meaning—that is, in addition to what he means to communicate, the meaning of his self—is in not incidental parallel

¹⁴ “That’s a degree to love,” says a desperate Olivia, in response to Cesario’s “I pity you” (*Twelfth Night*, III.i.87-88).

with Caliban's "made much of me" in line 336; this series of constructs suggests that in Prospero's realm, identity, indeed, selfhood, is dependent upon lexical knowledge and capacity.

Several times throughout the play, Caliban is called "mooncalf," a term which seems at once humorous and somewhat affectionate, and indicative of Caliban's physical deformity. Mooncalf is defined as an "abnormal mass within the uterus, *spec.* one formed as a result of the death and degeneration of the fetus early in gestation... formerly regarded as being produced by the influence of the moon" (OED). This definition expands to connote an ill-conceived idea or enterprise (such as Stephano and Trinculo's insurrection plan), a "person who idles away time in dreaming" (perhaps one who enjoys "sweet airs," and when he wakes, "crie[s] to dream again"?), "a congenital idiot," ("which any print of goodness wilt not take"), or, in the definition for which the usage in *The Tempest* is cited as an example, a deformed animal or monster. Given that each of these definitions seems relevant to the act of dubbing Caliban with this title (particularly in a play where naming is so important), it is a mistake not to consider the initial anatomical evocation of the word, and to recognize its reflection in Caliban's choice to mention, of all the words he must have been taught, the lesson in which he learned "how / To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night" (I.ii.334-6).

In both his frequent, occasionally surprising eloquence, and his harsh verbal violence, Caliban displays the results of his lessons: "You taught me language, and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (I.ii.363-5). That Caliban's curse here is articulate and alliterative, and therefore representative of the indelible mark made upon him by Prospero—one cannot deliberately unlearn a language—makes it all the more expressive of his frustrations, and of the power dynamic that exists between them being bound up with parenting and education. The structure of this line sequence—the introduction of

the lesson, Caliban's report on what he learned and how he has profited by it, his provision of an example of what he learned, followed by a reiteration of the lesson—seems also to recall Prospero's catechistic methods and in doing so to reinforce Caliban's status as imprisoned by education; further, Caliban's use of language to curse is an example of the kind of mutilative mimesis frequently observable in Shakespearean children, and interestingly complicated in nineteenth-century representations of children (as discussed in Chapter Three), as efforts at education collide with the status of the mimetic child as unnervingly and inexplicably independent, verging on supernatural.

Ariel and Caliban are introduced early in the Lambs' *Tempest* (before the exchange detailed above between Prospero and Miranda) as, respectively, a "gentle spirit," and "an ugly monster," a "strange mis-shapen thing," like an ape (2). Like Shakespeare, the Lambs prioritize the language lessons, reporting that Prospero took Caliban in "and taught him to speak"; his offense is simplified to "his bad nature... would not let him learn anything good or useful" (2). While it is obvious why a children's tale would exclude discussion of Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda and his Darwinian desire to "people... th[e] isle with Calibans" (I.ii.150-1), it is also true that without this information, the emphasis for child readers is placed wholly on the importance of learning and the consequences of the failure to do so: being "employed like a slave, to fetch wood, and do the most laborious offices" (Lamb 2). Further, curbed by this excision are Caliban's mimetic tendencies and independent generative impulses, parallel albeit darker versions of the characteristics the Lambs subdue in Miranda. The omission also absents another instance of female corporeality and reproduction (though Caliban seeks to make his peopling of the isle as independent a project as possible), and eliminates the image, unsettling in

its autonomous empowerment, of an island run and overrun by the offspring of two mimetic children whose impulses were not kept in check.

Besides these paternally enforced consequences and the editorial suppression of generative impulses, the narrative relates, with mild glee, Ariel's tendency to torment Caliban; this is the first example of the effect, attributable to the *Tales*' essentially Romantic reverence for poetry and imaginative play, of the Lambs' careful attempts to preserve Shakespeare's language by structuring their narratives around direct adaptations of characters' lines as dialogue, with the intervening narration also often in Shakespearean phrasing. The preface notes that this practice is especially fluid in the tragedies, with the conversion of Shakespeare's words into narrative form, as opposed to just dialogue, proving more problematic in the comedies. One effect of this effort toward faithfulness is that the tone of the stories blends somewhat straightforward and occasionally moralizing narrative intervention with a poetical style. Further, the conversion of individual characters' lines into narrative presents the fascinating generic problem of projecting the viewpoint of a particular character as the objective narrational position, granting narrative authority to what was initially character perspective; at times this is accounted for by reiterations of characters' verbal agency; of Othello, for example, they write: "But he was resolved she should die; else (as he said) she would live to betray more men, as she had done him. Then he kissed her for the last time (as he said)..." (285). At others, it becomes a seamless part of the story and an inevitable comment on the content and its relation to the original. Here, for example, it is Caliban's own pathetic reporting of his abuse by Ariel that becomes, in the Lambs' version, light comedy with an undertone of the dangers of disobedience and indolence:

When Caliban was lazy and neglected his work, Ariel... would come slyly and pinch him, and sometimes tumble him down in the mire; and then Ariel, in the likeness of an ape,

would make mouths at him. Then swiftly changing his shape, in the likeness of an hedgehog he would lie tumbling in Caliban's way, who feared the hedgehog's sharp quills would prick his bare feet. With a variety of such-like vexatious tricks Ariel would often torment him, whenever Caliban neglected the work which Prospero commanded him to do. (2-3).

The speech from which this information is adapted is one of Caliban's celebrated moments of incongruous eloquence; though he fears being overheard by Prospero's spirits, he "needs must curse"; (II.ii.4) nowhere in his monologue does he mention neglecting his work, the chief motivation assigned by the Lambs for Ariel's antics; Caliban only explains that the spirits do nothing unless bidden by Prospero, and that they are set upon him "for every trifle" (II.ii.8) The violence of these attacks is significantly reduced in the *Tales*; the hellish "pitch me i' the mire" becomes the gentle, playful "sometimes tumble him down in the mire"; the taunting spirits "that mow and chatter at [Caliban] / And after bite him," are softened to Ariel, "in the likeness of an ape," making "mouths at him." Omitted entirely are the leading of Caliban "like a firebrand in the dark," and the "adders who with cloven tongues / Do hiss [him] into madness" (II.ii.6, 13-14). Any sympathy the reader or audience might feel for Caliban is further limited as a result of the genre change, since in the play, though he curses and grumbles and is motivated by fear, he is observed in the process of completing his assigned tasks. The result of the generic modification, then, is in part a simplification of the moral lessons of the play, through Caliban as a character. This simplification, particularly with its narrative and linguistic effects, and when paired with the parallel subjugation of Miranda's mimetic and imaginative potency, is an instance of the recurring tension in the *Tales* between the Lambs' impulses toward the promotion of Romantic ideals through preservation of language, and their nonetheless didactic efforts.

Mark Me: Parenting as Performance

Where Caliban is an abortion, a “thing of darkness,” it should be noted, Miranda is literally “to be wondered at”; in the scene discussed above, as Prospero prepares to impart to Miranda her history, he removes his “magic garment,” an act followed by the line, “[I]e there, my art. Wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort” (I.ii.25). Although the first command is more apparently in reference to his momentary and deliberate putting aside of his magical art as represented by the discarded garment, the structure of the line, with its unshifting direct address and repeated commands, also constructs Miranda as a referent of Prospero’s possessive “my art.” Miranda’s status as Prospero’s valuable and carefully crafted masterpiece continues to be emphasized throughout the play, up until his resignation as supreme artist, directly following his expenditure of creative energy in the direction of the wedding masque of Miranda and Ferdinand. Prospero’s addressing Miranda as “my daughter, who / Art ignorant of what thou art,” also seems, in its epanaleptic emphasis on “art,” to support this idea; further, the repeated use of “art” as a conjugation of “to be” here reaffirms the connection for Prospero, and for Miranda as his daughter, between being, and being an object of artistic or literary value.

Prospero is one of many Shakespearean parents—from Leontes (discussed in Chapter One) to the ghost of Hamlet’s father (also, of course, a Hamlet, who would spur his son to action)—whose character and actions reveal the mimetic child’s essential counterpart in the performing or performative parent. In his section on parenting in *Growing up in England*, Anthony Fletcher includes chapters entitled “Motherly Performance” and “Fatherly

Performance”¹⁵; the material in these chapters suggests that these denominations are not merely clinical, but in fact indicative of Fletcher’s subtle awareness of the nuances of performativity, and the complicated art of parenting. His comments that “[m]others thought about the work of bringing up children as performance,” (108) and that seventeenth-century “gentry fathers normally quite sincerely acted out the patriarchal role that the conduct writers delineated” (129) are both representative of the understanding of performance as the playing of a role, the following of a script. The slippery wordplay of the *work* of mothering and fathering, and the play inherent in childhood and characterizing the kind of play-acting implied is intentional, and is present in other critical conversations.

Fletcher identifies as “[t]he hallmarks of sound fatherly performance” a number of acts including “leading household prayers, catechizing children, [and] exact[ing] deference and obedience,” through beating if necessary (129). The first two of these are especially relevant here, though there is certainly a place for discipline, corporeal and otherwise, in the schema of parental role-playing. For the purposes of considering family Shakespeares, though, the father as leader of household prayers—gathering the family together to follow a scripted (and sacralized) text as ritual—is particularly important. The idea of the catechism too, addressed already in the earlier analyses of Mamillius and young MacDuff, is central to the intersecting notions of performing parents and mimetic children, and to the place of nineteenth-century adaptations of Shakespeare for children in the trajectory of children’s literature.

The designation of parenting as performance, though, also carries with it the implication, suggested by the theatrical interchangeability of the terms “performance” and “production,” of

¹⁵ Fletcher’s separation of mother’s and fathers is another example of distinct gendering, which he attributes to ideas about education before WWI. Thus the importance of gender in considering the material of this chapter operates not only on the level of characters, editors, and audience, but of parents as well.

the process of performing or the entity of *a* performance as associated with delivery, creation, and production. While this is acknowledged in Fletcher's work, it is more specifically and explicitly articulated in Douglas A. Brooks' collection *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*. This ingenious pairing receives a thorough treatment in this group of essays, all of which demonstrate "...the conceptual, rhetorical, and metaphorical links between procreation and authorship, between reproduction and publication" (Brooks 2). The book is specifically focused on the Early Modern period, because, as Brooks explains, the invention of the printing press "exposed and disturbed the epistemic foundations of English culture," transforming the "discursive field of parenting...so that many important cultural systems relating to gender, sexuality, human reproduction, legitimacy, maternity, kinship, paternity, dynasty, inheritance, and patriarchal authority came to be grounded in a range of anxieties and concerns directly linked to an emergent publishing industry and book trade" (2).

Brooks' thesis is intriguing, and the variety of the essays in the volume testify that it operates not only on a larger conceptual and discursive level, but is ultimately dependent upon the relatively straightforward textually founded notion that "issues related to human reproduction, parentage, and child-bearing were often articulated in the language of the book trade," and that, reflexively, discussions of "authorship, printing, or publication in the same period" turned frequently to the "language of parenting" (2). He references examples such as the designation of sons unlike their fathers as badly printed, and of poorly published books as bastards. Margareta De Grazia argues that the recurrence of the "textual imprint as child" trope puts into play

the semantics shared by biological and textual reproduction: of issue, generation, copying, duplication, multiplying, engraving and gravidity; of textual and sexual

inscriptions that survive the grave through enduring ideas and successive children; of two types of lines, scripted and genealogical which promise to extend the parent/author beyond death. (qtd. in Brooks 3)

Perhaps especially relevant to this argument is Katherine Eisaman Maus' gendered examination of the association by early modern English (male) writers of "the creative imagination with the pregnant female body," and related "analogies between mental creativity and bodily fecundity" (Brooks 10). This relation of imaginative creation and physical female fertility is certainly present in Shakespeare, and the treatment of it in the various eighteenth- and nineteenth- century adaptations considered herein often reveals anxieties about the subject which are often in interesting dialogue with their editors and editorial processes.

Brooks and his authors make abundantly clear and convincing the early modern links between reproduction and publication. Shakespeare is of course an important figure for the work as a whole, not only because of his prominence in the period, but also because of his focus on male anxiety about the legitimacy of children (3), and his use (identified by Richard Wilson) of "the proprietarial rights and productive relations of his own industry" to characterize parenting (qtd in Brooks 8). The published book, though, is only one art form whose production has been viewed as comparable to the process of conceiving, delivering, and raising a child; the association of parenting with the production of art is ubiquitous. In an essay focused primarily on painting, Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes, "[w]e say that a human being is born the moment when something that was only virtually visible within the mother's body becomes at once visible for us and for itself. The painter's vision is an ongoing birth" (94)¹⁶. The connections made by Brooks,

¹⁶ The association here of the creation of art with the act of giving birth, as well as Merleau-Ponty's focus on visibility, and the idea of ongoingness, is especially pertinent in the context of this argument because of its natural extension to some of the issues of the historical period in

by Merleau-Ponty, and by many others (including Mary Shelley in her “hideous progeny” *Frankenstein*, addressed at length in Chapter Three, along with her own complicated relations with her father and performance) between birth and the creation of art provide a useful framework for this chapter’s argument.

Gathering the Flowers of Knowledge: Fancy vs. Morality in Children’s Shakespeares

Prospero’s two “children”¹⁷ and his relation to them as depicted in this opening scene, but also as they perform and progress throughout the play, embody a popular dichotomy which characterizes the study of children’s literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—carefully controlled access to imaginative play, and rigid moral instruction. In her concise and intensely informative article “Introducing Shakespeare: The Earliest Versions for Children,” Folger Shakespeare librarian Georgiana Ziegler offers an outline of historical and ideological trajectories of adaptations of Shakespearean works for children, with particular focus on the point that although the works of the Bowdlers and especially of the Lambs are usually taken as the starting point for studies of such adaptations, their publications actually “took place in a context where the value of Shakespeare as a source of pleasure and instruction for children, particularly in the domestic pedagogical context, was already securely established” (132). What is perhaps the most compelling and synthesizing aspect of Ziegler’s otherwise largely historical presentation is the recognition, alluded to above, of the editions of the Bowdlers and Lambs as

question in this chapter and in Chapter 2, specifically the place of the child in the Romantic movement (and the years which precede and follow it).

¹⁷ Although Ariel is not discussed at length here, he is also a child figure to Prospero in many ways, and he demonstrates mimetic tendencies in his execution of Prospero’s commands through dramatic performance. Christopher Small’s book on Shelley, Mary Shelley, and *Frankenstein* is entitled *Ariel Like a Harpy*, recognizes this convergence.

“the outcome of two strands of thinking about children’s literature...and as the models for two ways of presenting Shakespeare that were taken up by others in the following century” (146). Both modes of thought begin with Locke’s theories of education, but progress through conflicting trajectories; the Bowdlers’ work, descended from Edgeworthian morally motivated didactic works, incorporates a “distrust of imaginative literature,” where the Lambs’ stories, like those of Mary Wollstonecraft (first wife of the Lambs’ publisher William Godwin and author of a number of books for children), propose communication of healthy moral lessons by means of imaginative play; Wollstonecraft argues that “reason strikes most forcibly when illustrated by the brilliancy of fancy” (qtd. in Ziegler 134). Fletcher characterizes the distinction as being between “the free flow of fancy and imagination, represented by John Newberry’s successful nursery publishing trade in the 1750s” and the “moral didacticism, strongly led by Barbauld’s series *Lessons for Children*”; works like Barbauld’s and those of Sarah Trimmer, and Ellenor Fenn, who followed in her footsteps, “were aimed at obedient youngsters, strictly guided by mothers who had their eyes on producing useful adults” (8).

Ziegler quotes in full the introduction to the chapbook “The History of Shylock the Jew,” but its most important points for the argument at hand might be recounted as recognizing the dual nature of the value of Shakespeare as both entertaining and morally edifying: “at the same time the fancy is delighted,” the author writes, “the mind is improved”; children’s editions might therefore “unite pleasure with profit.” Since Shakespeare’s “ideas are generally natural and sublime, abounding with instructions for our conduct in life, our duty to GOD and one another,” his works “afford an ample field, for the youth of both sexes, to sport and gather the flowers of knowledge in” (“History” 7-9). This distinction between education and entertainment is applicable not only to the Bowdlers’ and Lambs’ works, and is not only descriptive of a basic

pedagogical concern, but is particularly relevant in consideration of Shakespeare and the adaptation of his works for children because it is impossible to ignore in Shakespeare's works either the moral implications or the brilliancy of his fancy. These yoked components of morality and fantasy, and another not unrelated element of the process of adapting Shakespeare for children—language—as well as the larger question of the works themselves as well-suited to children, can be brought together productively in relation to the concept of play. Having earlier established the importance of the mimetic child both in and in the reading of Shakespeare's work, and acknowledging the inevitability of the notion of play in this context, it is important to recognize here that both of the “strands of thinking” are concerned in some way with mimicry and performance. Nineteenth-century editors of children's Shakespeares take plays, play with their words and the stories they provide, and offer them to children whose natural tendencies towards mimicry, performance, and play, allow them to enjoy (play with) and learn from (mimic) the lessons therein—moral, imaginative, and linguistic. From such works, children can learn how to play, how to act (and how not to act), how to speak, and how to think. The entire process is, therefore, tied up with different kinds of play and with mimetic and performative tendencies.

A small but important point on a note Ziegler makes at the opening of her article is illustrative of the status of Shakespeare in relation to these questions of education, entertainment, imagination, and performance; of a passage in Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* in which children's independent reading of Shakespeare is interrupted first by domestic squabbling of younger children and finally by the mother's substitution of a bible lesson, Ziegler writes:

The seeming interchangeability of Shakespeare and the Bible here marks the way both books were central to Victorian homes. Indeed, Shakespeare was raised to god-like status

by writers such as Beddoes and Carlyle, while Arnold noted that “‘The Bible and Shakspeare’ were, by the Victorian period, naturally mentioned in the same breath and ‘imposed upon an Englishman as objects of his admiration.’”¹⁸ (Ziegler 149n).

Shakespeare’s scriptural status has been discussed by these critics and excellently elsewhere¹⁹, but to suggest direct interchangeability in this particular scene, especially in a text by Yonge (who was herself responsible for the 1885 *Shakespeare’s Plays for Schools*), is to undermine the complex interworkings of this specific textual moment which seems ironically to isolate the very dichotomy with which Ziegler is so concerned; the children’s independent interaction with the Shakespearean text is the site of imaginative free play, where the bible lesson is structured, adult, moral, and closes off the other play. This seems somehow implicit in Ziegler’s treatment of Yonge’s novel, but the placement of the note and the idea that the texts should be seen simply as interchangeable when their fictional context communicates something else entirely seems like a missed opportunity for examining how Shakespeare in particular works into the moral and imaginative education of nineteenth-century children.

The publication in 1807 of the *Family Shakespeare* and *Tales from Shakespeare*, then, emerged from an extant tradition of appropriation of Shakespeare for juvenile purposes, both educational and fantastical. The rise in the period of works which dealt in some way with Shakespeare and which were directed towards a juvenile audience²⁰ supports the argument for the simultaneous development of and productive relationship between Shakespeare and children established at the end of the eighteenth century. The earliest of such manifestations seem to be in

¹⁸ Gary Taylor, 167. Qtd in Ziegler 149n.

¹⁹ See Charles LaPorte, “The Bard, The Bible, and the Victorian Shakespeare Question.” *ELH*. 74.3 (2007): 609-628.

²⁰ Some texts dealt with here are more generally addressed to families, to a learning public, or in some cases to women.

the form of extracted passages included in anthologies such as Enfield's *The Speaker*, composed with "a view to facilitate the improvement of youth, in reading and speaking," the *Young Ladies Miscellany*, or William Dodd's *The Beauties of Shakespear*. Soon, though, as "games, toys, books, and apparel designed specifically for children" proliferated (Richardson 9), Shakespeare's works began to appear in the form of chapbooks (small, cheap pamphlets with woodcut pictures), and as references in children's consumer goods such as toy theatres and paper dolls. Eventually, these snatches of Shakespeare evolved into adaptations and expurgations of whole plays, of which the works of the Bowdlers and Lambs are probably the most famous, though by no means the only, examples. All of these Shakespeares, and the course of their development over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries offer intriguing and often surprising evidence of the intersections of children and childhood, Shakespeare, and mimicry and performance, and invite consideration of issues of gender and genre, consumer culture, and the tension discussed above between morality and imagination.

Tales from Shakespeare is a collection of prose adaptations of twenty of Shakespeare's plays (predominantly comedies) intended for "the young reader as an introduction to the study of Shakespeare" (Lamb xiii); it was attributed in its 1807 edition only to Charles, with Mary's contribution eventually credited in 1838. While the Lambs' *Tales* are a collaborative effort, it is known that Charles was responsible only for the adaptations of *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Timon of Athens*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*, while Mary wrote the other fourteen as well as most of the volume's preface. *The Family Shakespeare* is in four volumes, and contains "[t]wenty [again] of the most unexceptionable of SHAKESPEARE'S plays"²¹, in which *not a single line is added*," but from which the editor has "endeavored to remove every thing that

²¹ Henrietta omits the following plays: *Antony and Cleopatra*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Coriolanus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labours Lost*, *Measure for Measure*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Pericles*, *Timon of Athens*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

could give just offence to the religious and virtuous mind,” producing text fit “to be placed without danger in the hands of every person who is capable of understanding them” (vii). Although the text was first published anonymously, with the second edition (published in 1818 and including sixteen additional plays) attributed to Thomas Bowdler, Bowdler’s sister Henrietta has since been identified as the original author²². The shift in editorial perspective from sister to brother, while not tremendous, is nonetheless interesting; besides the more obvious developments of expanding the collection to include all of the then-canonical Shakespearean plays, and changing the spelling in the title to “Shakspeare,” Thomas also seems to adhere more strictly to the guidelines set forth on the title page, restoring some of Henrietta’s aesthetic cuts—since she admits that in addition to vulgarities, she might also “curtail” an “uninteresting or absurd scene” (vii). According to Perrin, “Dr Bowdler’s best-seller and Harriet’s obscure provincial book are quite different,” with Thomas the more respectful editor, and Henrietta’s focus primarily on sexual indecency, obscenity, and blasphemy; in true Protestant form, “what counted most was irreverence toward God or Jesus,” with less rigid attention to references to Mary or other oaths (73, 81). Thomas also restores some passages cut for impropriety, but with the occasional substitution of “a word that is less objectionable... for a synonymous word that is improper” (Bowdler 1818 x-xi). Overall, though, Thomas’ work is more thorough, as he cuts hundreds of passages Henrietta had left and “discovers many new improprieties in passages she had dealt with” (Perrin 81-2) (her negligence being, we can only hope, a result of her feminine naïveté).

The works of the Lambs and Bowdlers are often grouped together, with scholars identifying one as a “neat, if fortuitous parallel” with the other (Darton 191n) as a result of their

²² Noel Perrin is credited with this discovery though consideration of several previously unexplored letters.

contemporaneous dates of publication, the inclusion of an even twenty plays in each, the publication by women under fraternal cover, and the pursuit of (arguably) similar intentions through the general practice of revising into innocence with “consistent excision of low comedy and bawdy humor” (Richardson 152) and operation on “aesthetic as well as moral grounds” (Perrin 62). Despite this array of commonalities, and although the *Tales* have “many defects,” including their “unmistakable traces of the period’s morality and commerce,” (Darton 191-2), they are still sold in modern editions as valuable and time-tested introductions to the work of Shakespeare; the Bowdlers, by contrast, have become bywords for puritanical censorship and are vilified rather than being associated with the ideal of familial communion that they hoped initially to promote. This response—seeing the Lambs as kindly storytellers and the Bowdlers as prudish butchers—seems almost instinctual, but actually warrants closer attention. Darton identifies the *Tales* as “to some extent a revolt against the traffic in didactics.... They provide a defence of poesy by a kind of nursery introduction to it in prose” (191-2). Ziegler’s identification of the works of the Bowdlers and Lambs as representative of two divergent modes of thought about educational priorities (morality and imagination, respectively) may also help to explain the anti-Bowdler sentiments, given the valuing of imaginative play in modern pedagogies.

This discrepancy in critical and popular reception of the two works—“one still so reputable and the other now so disreputable”—despite their apparent ideological parallels, is one factor which may have influenced Perrin’s suggestion that such a close comparison of the textual details of the works might prove illuminating. Broadly, he opposes Harriet Bowdler’s righteously indignant “weeding” of Shakespeare to Mary Lamb’s “light-hearted” (and financially motivated) rewriting of the plays as “new objects in their own right” (62-63). Although these two sets of authors are widely known for their censorious (or, in the case of the Lambs, perhaps, benevolent

revisionary) practices, they were simply outstanding examples of a predominant and burgeoning trend. Though expurgation in various forms had been in practice for many years, the turn of the nineteenth century in England saw the rise of “a new literary morality” with which the expurgating of texts became a common practice (Perrin 5). Perrin associates this literary renewal with the period’s intense focus on urban renewal, as well as with the rise of sentiment and sensibility, the delicacy associated with the cult of feeling; “If there is nothing on the page to gasp at,” Perrin writes, “the capacity for gasping can be preserved at full strength for future occasions.” Other explanations include religion, “protection” of an increasingly diverse reading public, and the effects of the industrial revolution—the preservation of the “chaste sanctity of the home” in the face of the wild rise of industry (Perrin 15).

Critical discussion of the Bowdlers’ work in particular in the years since their initial publication has vacillated between general approval, approval of the project but dissatisfaction with the product, and general disapproval. Even contemporary reviews of the *Family Shakespeare* display this range of views, arguing variously that “a *castrated* version of his plays has long been desirable,” that while “[t]here are doubtless squeamish people to whom these mutilations would be acceptable...[and that in some cases] such a process would have been necessary, Shakespeare, we should think, might have escaped,” and that the expurgation was appalling in its not being thorough *enough*.²³ Rival expurgations like J.R. Pitman’s *School-Shakspeare* echoed this sentiment that the plays had not been “sufficiently purified from coarse and profane expressions,” but perhaps even more convincing of the prevalence of this viewpoint was the subsequent proliferation of expurgated Shakespeares: By 1850, there were seven; by 1900, more than fifty.

²³ The *Monthly Review*, the *British Critic*, and the *Christian Observer*, respectively. All qtd. in Perrin 75.

Richard Altick discusses Bowdler initially to suggest that the prudishness often associated with the Victorians in fact has its roots in earlier years (the *Family Shakspeare* having been published twelve years before Victoria was even born), and later as an example of the kind of Evangelical censorship encouraged by an increased reading public over the course of the nineteenth century. Altick's critical commentary on the nineteenth century's "most celebrated instance of expurgated literature" argues that Bowdler's²⁴ substitutions were "pale (and often misleading)," that his "nose was super-sensitive but not always dependable, and [that] the comprehensiveness of his expurgation policy was matched only by the inconsistency with which he applied it" (193). Bowdler expunged "many expressions of unexceptionable innocuousness," while "failing to detect many genuine ribaldries" (Altick 193). Altick also quotes a contemporary reviewer who, he writes, observed that Bowdler supports "the old saw, that the *niciest* person has the *nastiest* ideas, and has omitted many phrases as containing indelicacies which we cannot see, and of the guilt of which our bard, we think, is entirely innocent" (193).²⁵

This fact that while the Bowdlers are the most notorious of Shakespeare's expurgators, they were not at all alone in the field, is just one of several appealed to by modern scholars who often seem intent on redeeming the *Family Shakespeare*. In his essay on "The Bowdlers and Their Family Shakespeare," for example, Colin Franklin states his intention to redeem "the tribe of Bowdlers," and their work, which he feels has been "sadly misjudged." Such scholars often turn to Swinburne's mention of Bowdler in "Social Verse," perhaps because of the seeming discord of support for Bowdler's project coming from such a scandalous decadent (Harvey Darton, for example, expresses this raised eyebrow in his parenthetical comment that Swinburne "of all people," approved of Bowdler's work). Swinburne's essay is a sort of review of Frederick

²⁴ Altick refers here only to Thomas.

²⁵ From the *Monthly Review*, reviewing the 1818 edition. Qtd. also in Perrin 83.

Locker-Lampson's poetry collection *Lyra Elegantiarum*²⁶; in discussing some of its poetry, Swinburne professes that if the performance of textual excision should "ever be a thankless part to play in any case of obvious or apparent necessity," such reception "reflects less than little credit on the taste and judgment of those whose objections or whose ridicule would make it so" (99). He continues in surprisingly adamant defense of the most notorious expurgator:

More nauseous and more foolish cant was never chattered than that which would deride the memory or depreciate the merits of Bowdler. No man ever did better service to Shakespeare than the man who made it possible to put him into the hands of intelligent and imaginative children; it may well be, if we consider how dearly the creator of Mamillius must have loved them, that no man has ever done him such good service. (99)

Swinburne's vehemence here suggests not only support for the project as innocent and well-intentioned, but also, interestingly, an argument for fondness and tenderness in the representation of Mamillius, who (as discussed in Chapter One) is frequently dismissed as unrealistic and coldly precocious.

Regardless of the debatable nature of their project, it is true that the Bowdlers have attained an infamy which is no longer—indeed, which has perhaps never been—tied all that closely to the specifics of their work; in his essay "Bowdler and Britannia: Shakespeare and the National Libido," for example, Michael Dobson argues that "the name 'Bowdler' provides a convenient shorthand for that normative policing of sexuality which actually begins far earlier, gathering momentum in English culture throughout the eighteenth century" (112). Dobson's essay, accordingly, does not deal explicitly with the Bowdlers or their Shakespeare, concerned as it is with the rise of the Bowdlerian impulse at the end of the eighteenth century. This

²⁶ "A collection of some of the best social and occasional verse of deceased English authors"; 1st and 2nd eds., 1867; revised and enlarged edition, 1891.

decontextualized appropriation is ironically representative of the majority of critical treatments of and references to the Bowdlers and their work²⁷. Noel Perrin's *Dr. Bowdler's Legacy* is almost surely the most thorough extant exploration of the Bowdler family and their literary products and influence; while his coverage of the *Family Shak[e]speare* is fascinating, and does give due attention to some particulars of the Bowdlers' product (though he calls it a "sharp loss" [61]), it is the focus of only two of ten chapters in the course of a larger exploration of the history and progression of Bowdlerism in general. He too uses the idea of "Bowdlerism" in its commonly understood general sense, subtitling his book "A History of Expurgated Books in England and America," and including chapters like "The Causes of Bowdlerism," and "Bowdlerism before Bowdler." The importance and cultural relevance of the work, as well as the process of its generalization, is represented by the incorporation into the English language of "bowdlerize," as a verb meaning "to expurgate (a book or writing), by omitting or modifying words or passages considered indelicate or offensive; to castrate" (OED). In the preface to the fourth edition of *The Family Shakspeare*, Thomas Bowdler suggests that "the great objection which has been urged against [the work]...has been urged with vehemence by those who have not examined [it]," and, as prepared as readers are to argue with Bowdler's treacherous rhetoric, his argument seems to be still very much the case (ix).

The Lambs' *Tales* have a less contentious reception history, but have nonetheless been the subject of critical discussion. In her article discussed above, Felicity James makes direct textual use of the writing in the *Tales* as support for her various points, a rhetorical tactic employed herein and identified above as surprisingly uncommon. James Andreas, in his essay "Canning the Classic: Race and Ethnicity in the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespeare*," also treats the

²⁷ For example, it seems telling, or at least amusing if not conclusive, that the MS Word spell-check function recognizes "bowdlerize" and not "Bowdler."

Lambs' adaptation as a serious work of literature worthy of analysis, rather than simply generalizing about the work based on its historical and cultural context. Both James and Andreas base their arguments on not only the texts themselves, in which stories are told for children, but also the prefatory material, in which stories are told for parents and the general public. Andreas establishes his own argument by first considering the stated intent as expressed in the preface, and both critics acknowledge the role of the preface in understanding the text's function and intent, as well as considering the often conflicted relation between preface and content. This chapter begins with analysis of the raw material of adaptation which would have been the most direct point of contact between children and the works of Shakespeare. Consideration of whether and how these texts seem to execute the purposes stated in their introductions, both individually, and as a dynamically situated and evolving body of works, and the placement of this body in dialogue with the larger argument of the mimetic child, and the period's significant intersections (articulated in Chapter One) between children, Shakespeare, and performative or mimetic tendencies, reveals that the progression of these adaptations over the course of two centuries can be seen as broadly representative of the progression of ideas about children, parents, education, gender, Shakespeare, performance, imagination, and the relation between form and content in England over the course of the nineteenth century.

Fronting Matters / Designed for the Use of Young Persons

In current writing on Shakespearean pedagogy the question of "Why Shakespeare?" often arises (usually from a semi-defensive modern anti-canonical perspective). Expressing the reasonings behind a particular work—why Shakespeare, and why what's been done to him—is a common feature in many earlier adaptations or excerpts. These explicit justifications are most

often found in the texts' introductions or prefaces, which make claims to educational benefits—moral, elocutionary, literary—as well as to the indulgence of juvenile imaginative practice, and to the status of editors as benevolent protectors, preserving the innocence of a rapidly increasing and diversifying reading public. There are also historically situated arguments to be made, which would not have been addressed directly in an introduction, but which are certainly persuasive from our more modern perspective, such as Gary Taylor's acknowledgment that since "familiarity with Shakespeare was expected of every educated person," it was therefore ideal for "aspirant middle-class children to make his acquaintance" (207).

Authors' prefaces are perhaps especially revealing in the case of children's literature, where the true intended audience is parents, and the tone is distinct—explanatory, and occasionally defensive. Both the *Family Shakespeare* and the *Tales* are preceded by general prefaces, and Bowdler's 1825 fourth edition has several besides, including the original preface from the 1807 edition, a new one for the new edition, and "particular prefaces" annexed to the three plays the expurgation of which he found, for various reasons, especially difficult.²⁸ Perrin's claim that a comparison of these two famous adaptations might prove illuminating is dependent upon the juxtaposition not only of the texts themselves, but also of their own commentaries. In the case of the Lambs and Bowdlers, the comparison is not only generally illuminating, but specifically revealing of multiple concerns that are essential to the argument of this chapter; in articulating their motivations and goals, the authors communicate the texts' positions in relation to the concepts of performing parents and mimetic children, and the roles of language and gender in this exchange, while grounding the stories in their history as early nineteenth-century works for children.

²⁸ There is also an interesting postscript to *Othello*, discussed in more detail below.

The Lambs' title page explains that the tales are "designed for the use of young persons"; the Preface which immediately follows elaborates on this, submitting the work as an "introduction to the study of Shakespear" (iii). The primary focus, maybe strangely in an instance of prose adaptation of the plays, is on the importance of the preservation of "the effect of the beautiful English tongue in which [Shakespeare] wrote" (iii). It is perhaps this reverence for the poetry which has allowed the tales to avoid the vilification suffered by the Bowdlers (ironically, given that the Bowdler's adaptations are far more straightforwardly preservational); Lamb even expresses concern that the excess of dialogue may prove too challenging for "young people not used to the dramatic form of writing," but hopes to excuse the fault by promising "hints and little foretastes of the great pleasure which awaits" his young readers "when they come to the rich treasures from which these small and valueless coins are extracted" (v). In noticeable contrast to the Bowdler preface ("some defects are to be found in the writings of our immortal bard. The language is not always faultless" [viii]) the tone throughout the Lambs' is humble, belittling of the project; the authors refer to their tales as "faint and imperfect stamps of Shakespear's matchless image" (v). They employ, (interestingly, considering some of the Bowdlers' edits) one of Shakespeare's favorite metaphors to highlight their own inadequacy as adaptors: "...even in some few places, where his blank verse is given unaltered, as hoping from its simple plainness to cheat the young readers into the belief that they are reading prose, yet still his language being transplanted from its own natural soil and wild poetic garden, it must want much of its native beauty" (vi). Not only do the Lambs turn here to images of nature and of tended gardens, so familiar to us from moments such as Hamlet's dubbing his world an "unweeded garden," but they also, curiously, suggest that they are cheating or deceiving their juvenile audience. This self-deprecation, this auto-villainizing, besides highlighting the

Bowdler's benevolent condescension, then re-heroifies Shakespeare himself, and also introduces the quite modern conceit of tricking children into consuming that which will benefit them—medicine with a spoonful of sugar.

Andreas identifies as especially significant in the prefaces the fact that while “the Lambs assert that it is ‘the subjects’—the presumably dangerous topics—of Shakespeare’s plays, rather than the language, that are most difficult to deal with” (100), and express “an earnest wish to give as much of Shakespeare’s own words as possible” (Lamb xiii), the Bowdler's emphasize the faults of Shakespeare’s language in spite of his being “the first of dramatic writers” and the comparability of the beauties of his works “with the very finest productions either of our own or former ages” (xvi). They believe, nonetheless, that “[m]any words and expressions occur which are of so indecent a nature as to render it highly desirable that they should be erased” (xvi). The 1807 preface acknowledges the ready availability of editions of Shakespeare “with all his imperfections on his head,” and hopes to provide something new—an edition “which will be approved by those who wish to make the young reader acquainted with the various beauties of this writer, unmixed with any thing that can raise a blush on the cheek of modesty” (vii). Both sets of adaptors operate to some extent under a problematic division of form and content, which results in the general public reaction to the Bowdler's as an abomination—a manipulation of the original “true” form which betrays its content—and the Lambs’ as something nice, but entirely other than its revered progenitor. The seamless interweaving of content and form is an essential characteristic of Shakespearean drama; thus the division of the two reveals both features of the original works made more evident by their omission or revision, and significant points, such as those recognized above by Felicity James, about the adaptations and their creators. James’ attention to the personal and political lives of the Lambs and Godwins, as well as to anxiety

about female reading and behavior is important here. The relation of William Godwin (and his daughter) to this chapter's concepts of parenting and performance, education and adaptation, and gender is explored further in Chapter Three. The notion of the anxiety present in the *Tales* about girls and women reading, and the presentation of various Shakespearean women as potential models will inform my analysis of these adaptations, as well as later works like those of Anna Jameson and Mary Cowden Clarke.

James also highlights the potential insight in considering the personal and political lives of adaptors, if only in particular constrained ways of specific relevance. The editorial shifts described above between brother and sister in both works are both indicative of and also seemingly resulting from the editors' own experiences with parenting (or surrogate parenting), and the role of parents or parent figures in the control of juvenile education, specifically controlled performances of language learning, often in the form of storytelling. That both sets of stories begin with *The Tempest*, then, is not surprising. The reflection of that opening exchange between Prospero and his daughter/pupil/audience(/artwork) can be seen, filtered through the individual experiences of the editors writing these prefaces. This aspect of the prefaces—their admission of the role of the parent as performer (in the lives of the authors themselves as children, in the plays, and in the cases of their anticipated customers) is also telling in that the authors offer evocative seemingly biographical anecdotes to express how, and by whom, they intend for their works to be received.

Excerpts from the prefaces to the 1825 and 1818 editions of the *Family Shakespeare* offer a clear image of the envisioned reader experience, as well as providing insight into the influence of the editors' personal history and its effect on the work's placement in the progression of adaptations. A note added in 1825 to the reprinted preface to the first edition credits Thomas

Bowdler, senior, the father, with “any merit” that might be seen to be entitled to the *Family Shakespeare*. The Bowdlers²⁹’ language in describing the genesis of the project is reminiscent of Fletcher’s characterization, quoted earlier, of “sound fatherly performance”:

My first idea of *The Family Shakspeare* arose from the recollection of my father’s custom of reading in this manner to his family. Shakspeare... was a frequent subject of the evenings’ entertainment. In the perfection of reading few men were equal to my father; and such was his good taste, his delicacy, and his prompt discretion, that his family listened with delight to *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello* without knowing that those matchless tragedies contained words and expressions improper to be pronounced; and without having any reason to suspect that any parts of the plays had been omitted by the circumspect and judicious reader” (xviii)

While this note does some work toward characterizing the domestic scene into which the Bowdlers hope their book will be propelled, its primary effect is an expression of reverence, even idolization, of this perfect, judicious, entertaining father figure. Where both Bowdlers’ prefaces have been shown to evince confidence that the project offered improvement, the humility expressed in the combination of the evident awe at the father’s performance, and the comment that the author came gradually to believe that what his “father did so readily and successfully for his family, [his] inferior abilities might, with the assistance of time and mature consideration, be able to accomplish for the benefit of the public,” seems more in line with the Lambs’ presentation of their tales as “imperfect stamps” (v). This contrast highlights an interesting discrepancy between the two texts; while the Bowdlers are confident in their project

²⁹ The precise authorship of this particular note is debatable, and perhaps impossible to establish. The note is absent from the first edition, but added to the reprint of the preface in the 1825 fourth edition; the argument has been made that Bowdler’s death in early 1825 points to Henrietta as the author of this note, though it could of course have been written earlier.

with respect to Shakespeare, they are more conscious of their own inferiority in relation to their actual biological father; the note evokes mimetic anxiety, a doubtful hope that they will be able reenact their father's successful performance. In the case of the Lambs, however—the Romantic representatives—Shakespeare himself becomes the father whom they can only hope to honor through mimicry; they even make use of the kind of language which is the subject of Brooks' analysis in *Printing and Parenting*. Deeming the tales "faint and imperfect stamps of Shakespear's matchless image" draws upon imagery evocative of both artistic and biological reproduction, and casts the happy family with Shakespeare as father, Charles and Mary together as mother, and *Tales from Shakespeare* as the only somewhat satisfactory offspring.

Both prefaces are dependent upon this kind of portrayal of a particular family dynamic; the performing patriarch is even more romanticized, though presented from a general, depersonalized perspective, in the 1818 preface: "I can hardly imagine a more pleasing occupation for a winter's evening in the country, than for a father to read one of Shakespeare's plays to his family circle" (x). The details here—the specification of the season as winter, the ruralization of the family, and the use of the phrase "family circle"—enhance the dominant image of the *Family Shakespeare* as a playscript for domestic bliss; an extensive brood gathered eagerly around their kind, discreet, and talented father, hanging on his every carefully edited word. Quite a different picture is painted in the Lambs' preface, which is also more specific on the question of gender; where the Bowdlers write for "young persons of both sexes" (xi), the *Tales* are pronounced to be primarily for young ladies, since boys are "generally permitted the use of their fathers' libraries at a much earlier age" (xiv). Besides suggesting that girls read the condensed prose versions, the Lambs enlist the assistance of brothers in their sisters' educations:

Instead of recommending these tales to the perusal of young gentlemen who can read them so much better in the originals, their kind assistance is rather requested in explaining to their sisters such parts as are hardest for them to understand: and when they have helped them to get over the difficulties, then perhaps they will read to them (carefully selecting what is proper for a young sister's ear) some passage which has pleased them in one of the stories. (xiv)

Far from gathering his circle of children, both male and female, about him in front of a crackling winter fire, the paternal authority figure here is present only distantly and controllingly as owner of a restricted collection of book objects; this figure, then is linked to the rise in the period of children as a distinct consumer group. Perhaps even more relevant here, though, considering the editors and their significance to the text, is the benevolent brother who acts as Shakespearean medium and informed protector. Although author biography is not always a valuable interpretive tool, it does seem relevant at least to mention here that Mary Lamb's best known work besides the *Tales* is the murdering of her mother with a kitchen knife, and that after this domestic disturbance, which occurred in 1796, eleven years before the publication of the *Tales*, Charles (her younger brother by ten years) became her protector, collaborator, and partner in "double singleness"³⁰ until his death in 1834. The two even took in the fourteen-year-old orphan Emma Isola in 1823, "treati[ng] her as a surrogate daughter and [taking] seriously the project of educating her" (Hitchcock 249). Thomas Noon Talfourd, in the 1837 sketch of Lamb's life which accompanies his own edition of Charles' letters, characterizes the brotherly devotion which followed the matricide and the death of their father:

³⁰ After the death of their father in 1799, Mary returned home to a domestic situation which Charles would later describe as follows: "We house together, old bachelor and main, in a sort of double singleness" (qtd in Hitchcock 93).

On the death of his parents, [Charles Lamb] felt himself called upon by duty to repay to his sister the solicitude with which she had watched over his infancy; and well indeed he performed it! To her, from the age of twenty-one, he devoted his existence; seeking thenceforth no connection which could interfere with her supremacy in his affections, or impair his ability to sustain and to comfort her. (25)

This information—like that which Perrin offers on the Bowdler family—is not merely interesting from a biographical perspective, but seems also to be in direct ideological relation to their literary products and the nature of the *Tales* as children’s literature. The contrast between these two images of the ideal reader—the father with his family gathered around him in a ritualized performance of domesticity, and the two children independently navigating the wilds of the imagination—might be identified as representative of the development in the period from an eighteenth-century ideal of family and religion-oriented communal knowledge productions towards a more rugged individualism, such as that which informs Godwin’s social theorizing as well as Romantic ideals of self-discovery and literary production. The contrast is thus representative of the dynamic historical positioning of the two works and the movements with which they might be said to be associated; emerging from both Enlightenment and Romantic ideals, and gaining popularity with the rise of the Victorian period, both therefore offer an opportunity to consider the significance of this prolonged ideological transition as related to literature, education, and female and juvenile audiences.

The Lambs’ adoption of Shakespeare as a paternal figure in their hopes to respect and honor him through their adaptation is not wholly unique, as there are many instances of Shakespeare as father; what is particularly interesting about it though, especially in contrast to the Bowdlers’ condescending dismissal of Shakespeare’s authority, is the related division of the

two into the camps into which Ziegler places them—morality vs. fancy—and the consequent possible association of each with the literary and philosophical movements between which they are sandwiched, casting the Bowdlers as Enlightenment adapters, and the Lambs as Romantics. This division might also be profitably understood through a glance at Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* and a reminder that while Thomas Bowdler was a physician and expurgator and his sister an editor and author of such works as "Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity," Charles and Mary were best known for such Romantic pursuits as poetry, bouts of madness, friendship with Coleridge, and essays with titles like "Dream Children: A Reverie"³¹ written under a fanciful pseudonym. Just as reading Wordsworth's "We Are Seven" in the terms of the mimetic child complicates and challenges existing oversimplified conceptions of the idealized Romantic child, though, the analysis that follows here of the actual text of the *Tales* argues that neither the designation of the Lambs as Romantic, nor Ziegler's discrete division, is as simple and concrete as previous readings suggest. Rather, the Lambs and the Bowdlers both express ambivalence towards the creative energies of child (and female) figures in the text, and experiment with generic modification and editorial practices to redirect children's performative power towards adult mediated education and social training.

The stated intention in the Lambs' preface is that the *Tales*, as well as the full plays a few years down the road, should be for their readers "enrichers of the fancy, strengtheners of virtue, a withdrawing from all selfish and mercenary thoughts and actions, to teach [them] courtesy, benignity, generosity, humanity" (ix). The adaptation of the plays into "easy reading for very young children" is broad in scope and humble in tone; its primary values are imagination and

³¹ This essay, which offers in its title an effective contrast with Henrietta's sermons and an example of the Lambs' Romantic tendencies, is in fact a heartbreaking little piece which is extraordinarily relevant to the preceding discussion of the Lambs' biography, and the comparison to the domestic scene evoked in the Bowdlers' preface.

humanity (which seem to go hand in hand both in Shakespeare's work and in the Lambs' conception of it), and its position of self-evaluation is one of respectful well-intentioned inadequacy. The project is grounded in a Romantic promise of more, of a world of "infinite variety" beyond the limited confines of "this little book" (ix)—what Wordsworth might call "something evermore about to be," and which was frequently linked in the period to ideas about childhood, as discussed earlier. Both Lambs are known for their associations with major Romantic figures like Coleridge; Fletcher describes the contribution of Wordsworth and other Romantic poets to the development of the notion of childhood as building upon Locke's concept of the *tabula rasa* and Rousseau's "trust in experience as against reason" to find "in nature foundations for moral life as well as for beauty" (10). This combination of ideas, the resulting sacralization of the child, and the logical connection to Shakespeare, has been discussed in previous chapters, but is especially important for understanding the Lambs' project, its place in the course of juvenile adaptations, and its relation to the *Family Shakespeare* and other similar texts.

The nature of the *Tales*—of both the authorially stated approach, and of the stories themselves—is exemplary of the Romantic notion of childhood (discussed previously) as a state of privileged access to an imaginative realm where nature and sensory experience reign, and where both aesthetic and moral values are at stake. Besides this, the Romantics believed that during childhood "the unique self that created the particular individual was being constructed" (Fletcher 10). The imaginative spaces available to children seem for the Romantics to be defined by their limited accessibility by adults; this includes realms like Neverland, or Narnia, or the world view of Wordsworth's juvenile self, on whom he so wistfully reflects in the *Prelude*: "Would that I could now / Recall what then I pictured to myself..." (VII.106-107). Later writers

have expanded this spatial understanding of childhood to encompass not only a general concept of children, or only child characters, but also, as Nina Auerbach writes, “children to whom fantasy literature appeals,” who “are equally separate beings, colonizing fantastic countries adults need but cannot reenter” (*Private* 46).

In an 1802 letter to Coleridge, Lamb condemns the didactic works of authors such as Anna Letitia Barbauld and Sarah Trimmer for their failure to encourage the child’s “beautiful interest in wild tales”; Felicity James references both this letter and the image in the Lambs’ preface of Shakespeare’s language as a “wild poetic garden” as she considers the “contested and ambiguous nature of that ‘wildness’” (152-3). She suggests that critics have struggled to situate the *Tales* “in relation to children’s literature of the period and to the Lambs’ body of work,” and argues against the impulse to place the *Tales* in neat opposition to their more overtly didactic fellows, proposing instead that their “imaginative ‘wildness’” is “inextricably intertwined with their didactic element, a combination that has important implications for the way in which Shakespeare might have been viewed by children in the early nineteenth century” (154). Though James’ conclusion here is ultimately somewhat vague, the detailed layering with which she invests the *Tales* and their “wildness,” considering the “political and religious implications for the Lambs and their publishers, the Godwins,” the “reflect[ion of] anxiety over female reading and behaviour,” and the “special personal significance for the Lambs themselves” (155), encompasses a variety of issues pertinent to the argument at hand.

The cooperation of the Lambs’ arguments for the benefits of early introduction to Shakespeare, their particularly imaginative take on the tales themselves, and their promise of *more*, not fewer, rich treasures awaiting older children in the kingdom of Shakespeare indicate a connection to Romanticism which helps to characterize the *Tales*, contrasting them with the

parentally moderated and modified Bowdlers' plays, and looking forward to texts like *Peter Pan*, where children are acutely aware of their status as independent actors in the role of child, and where their stories are framed accordingly. The significant tension noted in the opening analyses, and highlighted by James' argument, between the Lambs' expressed intentions and the effects of their editorial choices, however, complicates our understanding of their project. Even in a work which explicitly promotes the importance of fancy, their emphases on parental control and education, often at the expense of juvenile imaginative freedom suggest a level of discomfort with the imaginative wildness associated with the mimetic child and with Shakespeare. In fact, it is perhaps because of their Romantic mentality that the Lambs feel the need to simplify and thereby disempower child figures. As discussed in the introduction to this work, in the establishment of the concept of the mimetic child, the Romantic attitude towards the child, emerging from new conceptions of childhood and preceding the doting Victorian Cult of the Child, is certainly idealizing but is also characterized by awe and ambivalence. This is what allows the child to be connected so integrally to the theater (much like the connection Nina Auerbach will draw between the "divine-demonic" woman and the Shakespearean actress and heroine). Obscurity is Edmund Burke's first tenet of sublimity, and the child's perspective, for the Romantics, as shown above, is characterized by its privileged way of seeing and the inscrutability of the child's mind and imagination. The mimetic child's integration into a text often takes a performative form somewhat equivalent to that of a da capo aria; his conceptions of being and expressions are grounded in the actions of his parents and the world around him, seen in textual echoes and repetitions. His creative power—that which unsettles—is in the tendency to use those repetitions as starting points for new and independent directions, suggesting both his efficacy as a literary device, and his status as an emerging autonomous entity. Frequently, the

Lambs allow for the first parts of the aria, which ostensibly gives the child imaginative freedom by allowing him to engage with the material at hand, but omit the final da capo aria, in which the performer is given free creative reign with the composer's material, thereby reducing juvenile performative power (both in characters and readers) to a safe, manageable level.

**“The house-affairs would draw her thence: / Which ever as she could with haste dispatch,
She'd come again, and with a greedy ear / Devour up my discourse”: Gender, Storytelling,
Shakespeare**

Wolfson's essay on Mary Lamb argues for a parallel case of the *Tales* exhibiting ambivalence towards an ideal they seem to seek to promote, but with a particular focus on gender and the direction of the work towards girls. “Introducing Shakespeare to girls thus,” Wolfson writes, “has the look of a progressive reform—a practical response to recent feminist calls, such as Mary Wollstonecraft's, to remedy that ‘false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men’”³² (16). It is a “cautiously managed” response, however, “marked by conservative ideology” and displaying of “ambivalent social attitudes” which both anticipate “modern feminist debates about Shakespeare's situation within patriarchal culture,” and indicate the dilemmas of such criticism—whether to see Shakespeare as critiquing of or complicit in and perpetuating patriarchal structures (16). The *Tales*, themselves, therefore, “alternately resist and reinscribe conventionality” (Wolfson 16). While some, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offer potential critiques of the social structures within which the women of the plays are bound, others, like *The Tempest* “naturalize conventional definitions of femininity and preserve orthodox interpretations of women's roles in society and family—and do so by eliding

³² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), ed. Carol H. Poston (New York: Norton, 1988), 7. Qtd in Wolfson, pg 16.

the possible ironies of Shakespeare's own representations, as if to contain and stabilize for young women what the plays themselves leave problematic" (23). The elision which Wolfson recognizes in Lamb of the play's own critiques often targets feminine performative tendencies, and the consequent preservation of conventional modes of defining the feminine is a useful introduction to the role of gender as a factor in the telling of tales, both as a thematic feature within the plays and in the course of the process of adaptation.

The Lambs' clearly gendered idea of juvenile reception of Shakespeare is an important aspect of the adaptation, its function, and its relation to others of its kind. Most writing from this period which has any kind of pedagogical intent, including the Prefaces to both the *Tales* and the *Family Shakespeare*, does demonstrate awareness of the question of gender, sometimes deliberately, and sometimes in more subtle or unintentional ways. Anthony Fletcher acknowledges the deep engraving of gender segregation in the British educational system in his assertion that "[t]he notion of educating both sexes in the same school [or even in the same style] did not enter into anyone's head in England before the First World War. In this sense, it is difficult to talk about prescriptions for bringing up English children as opposed to those for English boys and English girls" (5). Even in the earlier adaptations of Shakespeare directed towards children, the question of the gender of the intended audience is occasionally addressed. Sometimes it is mentioned offhandedly, suggesting a self-evident universality, as in the previously quoted preface to the "Shylock" chapbook, which idyllically argues that the works of Shakespeare "afford an ample field, for the youth of both sexes, to sport and gather the flowers of knowledge in" ("History" 7-9). Mary Wollstonecraft, ever fond of acknowledging gender even in her titles, writes in the *Female Reader* (1789) that although "[f]emales are not educated to become public speakers or players...to be able to read with propriety" is nonetheless

“certainly a very desirable attainment” (qtd. in Ziegler 135). It is traditional, then, for editors and adaptors to make some mention of whether it is little boys or little girls (or both) they expect to be reading their works.

The prefaces of both sets of editors appeal to the image of an act male censorship for a female recipient, presented not as violation or injustice, but as a demonstration of benevolent protection. That female editors should assume these explicitly masculine roles, but only under the kind of fraternal protection suggested in the Lambs’ preface, suggests a complicated layering of gendered concerns in the shifting editorial credits and the adaptive process, but originating in the plays themselves and extending to the reception by child audiences (and their parents). It also seems useful here to return to the OED’s inclusion of “castration” as a definition of Bowdlerization, in that the acts of expurgation practiced by both the Bowdlers and the Lambs are male inspired, female initiated, male commandeered, exertions (usually concerning female sexuality) upon a male author whose cultural status is overwhelmingly paternal. This censorship blends intriguingly with the adapted subject matter in that it is predominantly Shakespeare’s males, and usually when discoursing on matters involving women (also usually sexual), who require censorship, but also in the prevalence in Shakespeare’s plays, not abandoned by either set of revisers, of women listening to stories.

The two plays focused on by Andreas and discussed herein—*The Tempest* and *Othello*—are expressly concerned with male storytelling as a means of control over a passive, dominated, listening female. Prospero’s anxious obsession with Miranda’s attendance upon every word of his tale, his constant questioning in spite of her apparent engagement, is detailed in my first chapter. Both in its original Shakespearean form and in its various adaptive incarnations, *Othello* offers multiple opportunities for analysis related to the issues at hand, particularly the prioritizing

of parental control, and the treatment of Desdemona's being won over by the Moor's capacity for storytelling, a skill presented in the text as a kind of exotic witchcraft. The consistency of these arguments across the various plays and adaptations again present the reverberation of a thematic presence in the original play which is then observable in its adaptive processes and products.

Act I, scene iii of *Othello* begins in the midst of the Duke's midnight war council, into which Brabantio plans to throw himself, spouting accusations of Othello's abusing, stealing, and corrupting his daughter by means of witchcraft, since nothing short of "spells and medicines bought of mountebanks" could induce her "to fall in love with what she fear'd to look on" (63, 100). When a senator announces the arrival of "Brabantio and the valiant Moor," the Duke responds by welcoming "Valiant Othello," and informing him, "we must straight employ you / Against the general enemy Ottoman"; to Brabantio he says, "I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior" (50-52). Barely visible as opposed to immediately necessary, gentle as opposed to valiant, a tolerated interruption of the martial planning of abler men, Brabantio arrives on the scene of what he hopes will be Othello's social condemnation at a distinct disadvantage. In speaking with Iago earlier in the scene, Othello has foreseen the likeliness of his priority and already couched it in terms of verbal power, noting that the "services which [he has] done the signiory / [s]hall out-tongue [Brabantio's] complaints" (18-19). Once the accusation has been put forth, and the Duke asks what Othello can say to this, Brabantio interrupts with "Nothing, but this is so" (77). Proceeding in polite disregard of Brabantio's petulant and ineloquent interjection, Othello begins his nineteen-line opening statement with a respectful address to "most potent, grave, and reverend signiors" who surround him, then proceeds to recognize the irony in the accusation, and play upon it by prefacing his eloquent confession of the verbal art with which he enthralled his wife with a profession of his own ineptitude as a speaker:

Rude am I in my speech,
 And little bless'd with the set phrase of peace;...
 And therefore little shall I grace my cause
 In speaking for myself: Yet by your gracious patience,
 I will a round unvarnish'd take deliver
 Of my whole course of love; what drugs, what charms,
 What conjuration, and what mighty magic
 (For such proceeding I am charg'd withal,)
 I won his daughter with. (78, 83-96)

Having tempted his audience with this promise, Othello is met in the lines which follow with urgent requests from the “approved good masters” of Venice: “But, Othello, speak,” and “Say it, Othello” (79, 112, 128). After sufficiently piquing their interest and offering to fill the time it takes for Desdemona to arrive, Othello embarks on an extensive monologue, presented to the “grave ears” of the council, in which he tells the story of “[h]ow [he] did thrive in this fair lady’s love / And she in [his]” (126-8). At its conclusion, as visions of “moving accidents by flood and field” and “Anthropophagi and men whose heads / Do grow beneath their shoulders” dance across the conspicuously silenced stage, and there is a collective exhale of post-imaginative exertion from audience and war council alike, the Duke of Venice declares (and in doing so, makes explicit the foregone conclusion of Othello’s acquittal), “I think this tale would win my daughter too” (137, 146-7, 173).

The Moor’s capacity for storytelling which has defeated Brabantio in this trial is of course the witchcraft by which he has enthralled Desdemona, and his evocation of her listening becomes an important rhetorical device in the delivery of his testimony. He explains how she

would “seriously incline” to hear the stories of his life and adventures, of exotic lands and peoples, how she would “with haste dispatch” her household duties to come again with “greedy ear” to “[d]evour up [his] discourse” (148-152). Othello’s picture of Desdemona as a listener is that of a hungry savage, casting off the trappings of the life of the civilized woman to gorge herself on the flesh of his stories. It is in direct contrast to Brabantio’s misguided and clichéd paternal characterization of his daughter as “a maiden never bold; / Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion / [b]lush’d at herself” (96-8). Upon her arrival, Desdemona acknowledges her “divided duty”; bound to her father for “life and education,” she is “hitherto [his] daughter,” but she now “challenge[s] that [she] may profess” duty to her new husband, the Moor, her lord (183-191). At this point, then, control of Desdemona shifts to Othello, who has bested her father on all fronts, but most prominently the narrative.

It is Brabantio who, in disgruntled rhyme, concludes matters by responding to the Duke’s suggestion that he let go his “bootless grief” with the comment, “words are words; I never yet did hear / That the bruised heart was pierced through the ear” (221-22). The irony of Brabantio’s comment here is that this is exactly what he just heard in the case of Othello’s enrapturing of Desdemona, and it is of course, also, textually and conceptually linked to the disastrous events which will follow. Iago describes his plans to wake Othello’s envy with suggestions of Desdemona’s faithlessness and lust for Cassio as abusing and pouring pestilence into Othello’s ear (I.iii.396, II.ii.350). Brabantio’s loss of parental control over Desdemona at this early point in the play as the result of effective storytelling echoes in Desdemona’s death’s being a result of Iago’s malicious and subversive narrative art.

These interwoven significances of storytelling, gender, and questions of control do not go unnoticed by Mary Lamb, who writes in the tale of *Othello* that “Desdemona (as is the manner of

ladies) loved to hear [Othello] tell the story of his adventures,” (272) a note which seems a sort of subtle recognition by Lamb of the nature of her own interpretive project as established in the preface. As in their *Tempest*, the Lambs begin *Othello* with an immediate prioritizing of the father through the introduction of the reader (or listener) to “Brabantio, the rich senator of Venice,” who “had a fair daughter, the gentle Desdemona” (272). Shakespeare’s Brabantio, as has been argued above, is in fact a generally ineffectual non-entity in the play; unlike *Midsummer*’s Egeus, and certainly unlike Prospero who himself orchestrates Miranda’s marriage, Brabantio’s protests against the celebrated moor are unceremoniously dismissed and his status as a senator devalued in the face of Othello’s performance. Further, besides his demeaning appearance in the first act, the only other reference to him is in Act V, when Gratiano tells the dead Desdemona that her “match was mortal” to her father (V.ii.212); thus even his death is an afterthought and a failure to have any effect on his daughter’s actions. The Lambs are far more generous, noting that “[t]he age and senatorial character of old Brabantio, commanded a most patient hearing from that grave assembly” and ascribing Othello’s triumph mainly to the vehemence and unsubstantiation of Brabantio’s accusations (274-5).

Besides emphasizing Brabantio as a stable paternal figure, the Lambs downplay the voraciousness of Desdemona’s lust for a good story, and tend somewhat to vilify Othello. While Desdemona is described meekly as “regard[ing] the mind rather than the features of men,” the narrative reports that Othello’s tales “would so enchain the attention of Desdemona” (272) that she would hasten to listen. While the use of much of Othello’s precise wording, transposed to narrative, enhances the suggestion of his storytelling prowess, the image of enchainment—especially without the irony Othello interjects into his speech in identifying his storytelling as “the only witchcraft [he has] used,” (and following the assurance that Desdemona ought not “be

altogether condemned for the unsuitableness of the person whom she selected for her lover”)—implies involuntary imprisonment, which at once vilifies Othello, disempowers Desdemona’s imaginative engagement (as with the Lambs’ *Miranda*), and places the adaptation on the conservative side of Wolfson’s resistance/reinscription split.

In the Bowdlers’ editions, these arguments about intended audiences and the notion of male storytelling as a means of control emphasize those points which seem surprisingly *untouched*, considering the period’s “new literary morality” (Perrin 5). What is most surprisingly left alone in both the *Tempest* and *Othello* (though the “particular preface” here attempts, to some extent, to account for this) are violence, enslavement, and tyranny. The most striking of these are the graphic images of horrific violence, apparently deemed by the Bowdlers suitable for fireside reading. Caliban is allowed (by both brother and sister) to suggest the assassination of Prospero by “knock[ing] a nail into his head, . . . batter[ing] his skull, or paunch[ing] him with a stake, / or cut[ting] his wezand with [a] knife” (“Family” 36-7). Othello still resolves that he “will chop [Desdemona] into messes” (“Family” 469). While some of this is excused in the preface to *Othello*, and while the Bowdlers do seem to be concerned primarily with sexually and religiously charged language, the acceptance of these passages suggests, in the same way that the intentions articulated in the preface do, a self-conscious awareness of the act of censorship, and its relation to its material. After all, these notions, apparently deemed not improper by those who are otherwise the harshest of editors, are exactly those principles under which the bowdlerization of a text operates, since it is in fact, regardless of persuasive apparatus, an act of violent tyranny and subjugation both of text, and of the audience it intends to control.

Thomas Bowdler’s treatment of *Othello* is especially fascinating, in that the play and its preface (and in part, its postscript) represent, at the very end of the tenth and final volume, an

inevitable frustration with the entire project, which, in spite of their persuasive commentary, can be extended to the other thirty-five plays. Bowdler honestly presents his dilemma when faced with the adaptation of *Othello* for blushing youth. Though he has, as usual, tried to expunge the “indecent expressions” of minor characters, he professes himself unable to “erase all the bitter terms of reproach and execration with which the transports of jealousy and revenge are expressed by the Moor without altering his character; losing sight of the horror of those passions; and, in fact, destroying the tragedy” (245). The situation in which Bowdler then finds himself is that he is forced to decide between “departing in some degree from the principle on which this publication is undertaken,” and “materially injuring a most invaluable exertion of the genius of Shakspeare” (246). Perhaps surprisingly, and in a move that is decidedly satisfying and somehow moving to the modern reader—as if the progress of the ten volumes were a novel of morality, at the end of which the erring protagonist has realized his mistake and attempted to mend his ways, he chooses to compromise his project. The play “in its present form,” he explains, “is calculated to produce an excellent effect on the human mind: by exhibiting a most forcible and impressive warning against the admission of that baneful passion which, when once admitted, is the inevitable destroyer of conjugal happiness” (245-6). To hear Bowdler confess a sometimes unavoidable inextricability of emotional content and “improper” form is certainly refreshing to our modern sensibilities. Less so, perhaps, is the textual execution of this bold assertion, which results in a nonetheless altered version of *Othello*. Where Bowdler attempts to preserve *Othello*, for example, and his “infuriate passions of rage, jealousy, and revenge,” he wholly sacrifices the highly sexualized, and utterly integral villainy of Iago, and continues in his excision to call attention to those ideas of discomfort with feminine corporeality and fertility addressed above.³³

³³ The postscript, interestingly, is unrelated to Bowdler’s own editing of the text, and suggests, plausibly, that a love affair between Cassio and Desdemona, as the text stands, is in fact logistically impossible, a problem which could

Much language which relies upon botanical or organic imagery to communicate its ideas about femininity or sexuality has been omitted, including Iago's speech about bodies as gardens, and significant portions of Prospero's masque of natural abundance, as well as his warnings to Ferdinand about the breaking of Miranda's "virgin-knot" (IV.i.15)

Decontextualizing Shakespeare's Heroines

The Tempest's masque is an all-female performance in celebration (and threat) of true love and natural fertility. With its strong central female roles of Iris, Ceres, and Juno—the messenger of the gods, the goddess of agriculture and fertility, and the protectress of women and goddess of marriage and motherhood, respectively—it becomes in isolation as much a celebration of the creative and (re)productive agency of women. Its omission from the Lambs' tale and substantial editing in the Bowdlers' not only reiterates the uneasiness found in both of these "educational" texts with the mimetic fecundity of both children and women, but also raises the question of whether this kind of suppression persists in later texts which also address themselves to "domestic" audiences. Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Women* (later titled *Shakespeare's Heroines*), and Mary Cowden Clarke's *The Girlhood of Shakespeare's Heroines* represent the next stage in nineteenth-century adaptation, and a significant progression in the arguments about the mimetic child, shifting into texts not explicitly (and explicitly not) for children. With differing stated intentions, styles, and effects, both these woman writers isolate Shakespearean women, relocating them to new and varied narrative contexts which ultimately

have been resolved to satisfaction by having Cassio, rather than Iago, escort Desdemona from Venice. What is interesting here is not so much the suggestion itself, which is reasonable, but Bowdler's betrayal of his deeper commitment to the works of Shakespeare, and his aching urges towards perfection, not only through excision, but through amendment.

work to restore and even enhance their performative agency with specific attention to the traits they share with the mimetic child. In doing so, these texts critically reexamine the role of this literary motif as relevant to actual readers, and manage both to capitalize on and to critique the inherently disempowering grouping of women with children.

In analyzing the role of performance in the Shakespearean female characters of Jameson and Cowden Clarke, I turn to the work of Nina Auerbach and her conception of the Victorian angelic female ideal, as well as (briefly) to Tricia Lootens' consideration of the nineteenth-century critical framing—canonization through de-characterization and historicizing, alternately—of Shakespeare's heroines, the “century's only popular feminine equivalent to Saint Shakespeare” (10). Nina Auerbach's critical attentions have focused not coincidentally on both on the “illuminated presences” of children in Victorian novels in considering the lives of the Victorians as *Private Theatricals* (mentioned in my introductory establishment of the concept of the mimetic child), and on the myths of Victorian womanhood considered in *Women and the Demon*. Auerbach's location of the production of Victorian ideals for women in fear creates a direct parallel with the literary anxieties with surround the mimetic child. The source of the fear is also parallel; like the mimetic child, the “divine-demonic woman” possesses demonic “revolutionary ardor” and “dangerous mobility” translated directly from the “angel's otherworldly power” (4), and this derivation of power from assumed inherent weakness in both cases results in literary representation and the creation of actual social ideals.

The association of women and children and the textual modes of production of their respective social expectations following the 1807 emergence of the “two enduring monuments to the new domesticity” considered thus far in the chapter become sites of both productivity and critique in later adaptive works. Gary Taylor's section on the Victorian situation of Shakespeare

acknowledges the role of both women and children in shaping, “as never before, . . . the prevailing image of Shakespeare” (if “anonymously or under the covering fire of male authority”) (206, 209). An essential complication of this assertion is voiced by Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts as they point out in their illuminating collection of writing on Shakespeare by women between 1660 and 1900 that the same women who contributed to the development of a “‘youth market’ for Shakespeare in the nineteenth century, [by] preparing juvenile editions” were “encouraged to read expurgated editions” like *The Family Shakespeare* “to protect them from Shakespeare’s profanity and obscenity” (2-3). In this impossible convergence of editor/protector and reader/protected, Taylor recognizes the titillating “embarrassingly unrighteous paradox” of Henrietta Bowdler’s work: “[s]he could protect other women only by exposing herself to material to which a woman should not be exposed” (Taylor 207). Besides this paradoxical denial of women’s capacity for exposure to Shakespearean indecency—which itself expresses the simultaneity of vulnerability and creative power found in both the mimetic child and Auerbach’s angel/demon woman—these observations draw attention to the strange position of women at the time as placed somehow in disturbing equivalence with the children whom they birthed, raised, and wrote for.

Mirroring and intensifying the socially perceived partnership of women and children in domesticity and naïve vulnerability, the similarities between Auerbach’s “angelic demon”—a “preternaturally endowed creature who . . . becomes the source of all shaping and creative power” (183)—and the figure of mimetic child highlights their shared traits as sources of power located in vulnerability (but also in performativity and creative production) and made active use of by these later nineteenth-century female adaptors of Shakespeare. Both these literary tropes evince an unnerving creative power which is dependent upon an innate opposing powerlessness; we see

angels, Auerbach says, as “soggy dilutions of human complexity” (*Woman* 64) in the same way that children can be written off as unformed, uninformed, and likely to die. Both are theatrical. “It is in the Victorian theater,” Auerbach writes, “dominated by the overpowering individuality of the actor, and in the sorts of writing the theater inspired, that our myths of womanhood and literary character converge most visibly” (*Woman* 205). The power of both figures is unsettling to those who encounter it; Auerbach identifies the “imaginative association of women with monstrosity” as both stigmatic, and celebratory “of female powers of metamorphosis” (65). She invokes Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books and Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* as “the most famous examples of works whose comedy and terror depend upon the potential interchangeability between woman and creature” (*Woman* 65).

What Auerbach does not acknowledge here, and what is essential to understanding both my argument, and the works of Carroll and Rossetti, is that these are instances of interchangeability of *girl* and creature. With the onset of womanhood—“when both were wives, / with children of their own”—the vivid, terrifying, viscous interchangeability of *Goblin Market* becomes a faint memory of “pleasant days long gone” and “quaint fruit-merchant men” (Rossetti 545-6, 550, 553). Alice’s sister, that representative of the “dull reality” of an adult world “without pictures or conversation,” is forced to quell the dissatisfaction of her inability to access Wonderland with the same kind of idealizing—but ultimately disempowering—picture of Alice that Rossetti offers of Lizzie and Laura: a “grown woman...with the simple and loving heart of her childhood...[who] would gather about her other little children and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago” (Carroll 94, 1). This is not to say that Auerbach’s arguments about the association of womanhood and monstrosity are inaccurate; it is only that besides being female, her examples

are defined by their youth and sometimes their liminality, their relationship to the imaginative, and also their tendencies towards the performative (Alice being thrust into a series of imaginative scenes in which she must determine her role and how to play it, first Lizzie and then Laura engaging in the goblins' scripted commercial exchange), suggesting the equally significant power of textual treatments of the mimetic child in affecting dominant ideologies.

In yet another not incidental coinciding of Auerbach's investments with my own, she supports her arguments about the "incantatory" and "necromantic intensity in the representation of character" present in Victorian literature and associated with her mythological conception by turning to the representations of Shakespearean characters by Anna Jameson and Mary Cowden Clarke (209). She poses the two women in conversation, and sees both of their treatments of Shakespearean women as processes of liberation. The first and most obvious level of emancipation is that characters are allowed to have a life outside of the plays in which they would otherwise be "generally subordinate to the heroes and to the demands of the plot" (Auerbach, *Woman* 211). Jameson, and Cowden Clarke even "[m]ore completely," free their heroines "from the boundaries of their plays, endowing them with rich lives of their own whose autonomy is impinged on by neither Shakespeare nor the man his play will make them love" (Auerbach, *Woman* 211-212). Cowden Clarke's Desdemona, for example, who in Shakespeare's play "has little scope to reveal herself" is depicted "with such density that we swim in her consciousness, her experiences, granting her a structural and psychic primacy that obliterates the noble fool of a hero who will marry, murder, mourn, and upstage her" (Auerbach, *Woman* 212). The emphasis here is clearly on the plays' tendency to reinscribe patriarchal structures, the same problem identified by Wolfson in her discussion of Mary Lamb, and by the editors of the early anthology of feminist Shakespeare criticism, *The Women's Part*, who recognize that

Shakespeare's "women may strive to resist or to correct the perversions of patriarchy, [but] they do not succeed in altering that order not do they withdraw their allegiance from it" (Lenz 17).

Auerbach's implication of the role of Shakespeare himself in the oppression of his female characters is both a somewhat unjust characterization of the necessary omnipotence of the author, and an insightful critique into the establishment of Shakespeare as a patriarchal cultural monolith, but suffers (as does Lenz' claim) from a failure to acknowledge the often ironic interrogations of such structures by Shakespeare himself, moments which are highlighted by their omission from later adaptations (as shown above).

Besides considering the female characters' textual relations to the men who control them (including Shakespeare), and their potential extrication from and autonomous revision of that power dynamic (via genre play), Auerbach recalls this chapter's earlier discussion of the "two strands of thinking" about Shakespearean adaptation in her juxtaposition of morality with concepts like imaginative freedom, vitality, truth, and nature. Jameson's heroines are released not only from the bonds of Shakespearean plot and masculine character centrality, but also from "any merely typical or exemplary function" by prioritizing "truth and nature" over "moral lesson[s]"; the emphasis placed by Cowden Clarke's format on "the immortal vitality of the heroines...overwhelms their role as moral vehicles" despite their being "paragons of womanhood [whose] histories are repeated demonstrations of their moral purity in the face of male assaults" (Auerbach, *Woman* 211-212). Thus in Auerbach's view demonstration of morality becomes a constraint upon female character, and the recontextualized imaginings and considerations by Cowden Clarke and Jameson bestow upon the characters a vital energy, connected to truth and to nature, and derived from the imaginative processes which allow them to exist in these developed forms. This division corresponds roughly to that presented by Ziegler

between the two strands present in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century modes of thought surrounding education, the separation of the moral from the fanciful, often used to characterize opposingly the Bowdlers and the Lambs. The distinction is also characteristic of much in the works of the Lambs and Bowdlers that is suppressed through editing or revision, as outlined above, having to do with female imaginative and creative potential and independence, and its echoes in the natural, and in access to truth. In their modes of liberation, the production of adaptive material increasingly distinct from Shakespeare's works, and the interaction of these modes and products with the stated intention of the works, these two authors redefine the role of family Shakespeares, preparing readers for the twentieth century. Both works, in their direction to a broader audience, protest the untroubled conflation of women and children as audiences of expurgated, purified, or simplified Shakespeares, and their unabashed generic independence is further evidence of the progressive adaptive representation of intersections of Shakespeare, parent-child relations, gender, imagination and storytelling, and related questions of performance.

My first chapter argues for the parallelism in the nineteenth century of popular conceptions of the child figure and of Shakespeare given the sacralization of each, as well as their associations with nature and their imaginative and performative capacities which give rise to impulses to curb or redirect those energies through adaptation and education (and often educational adaptation). Tricia Lootens' arguments about the nineteenth century treatment of Shakespeare's heroines as representing the same "shifting, conflicted canonization" (9) to which Shakespeare himself was subject suggests yet another important extension of the role of the mimetic child and his—or her—tendencies. Both literary tropes—the performing child and the ideal Shakespearean woman—are made parallel with their own creator in a fascinating jumble of

mimesis and progenetic relations; that the creator, the historical situations, and the systems of canonization through critical emendation and recontextualization are the same places women and children in the texts and textual resurfacings into a complex position of fraught equivalency which is then open for interrogation in texts like Jameson's and Cowden Cowden Clarke's.

Lootens argues that canonization, “[a]lways a process of creation,..is also inevitably a process of loss” (10). The identically motivated and yet contradictory impulses to preserve untouched—”restoring the relics of genius not only to their proper forms but to ‘eternal’ literary life”—and to emend in doing so applies both to Shakespeare himself, and to the critical canonization of Shakespearean women in which Lootens identifies “two divergent but deeply connected strains”; the first reads the heroines as “basically interchangeable, ‘characterless’ revelations of the timeless and essentially incorporeal glory” of womanhood, while the second depends upon historicized individuality and moral complexity to argue for the status of the women as models. Both Mary Lamb and Jameson are identified as powerful representatives of this mode of sacralizing, and Lootens sees Jameson's *Characteristics* as attempting and occasionally attaining “powerful accommodations between the poles of heroine worship and historical readings, between elevating the generic character of woman and investigating the specific ‘characteristics of women’” (98). Jameson's “accommodation” can be located at least in part in her unusual interweaving of questions of genre and form with questions of gender, and her allowance of the specific strengths of Shakespearean women, often grounded in their mimetic and childlike tendencies, despite their enduring womanhood.

Unlike many of the works discussed herein, Jameson's collection is not an adaptation of the works themselves as fiction or drama. “The first book to examine Shakespeare's female characters at length and consider ‘women’ as a legitimate category of Shakespeare criticism”

(Thompson and Roberts 66-7), Jameson's *Characteristics of Women, Moral, Poetical, and Historical*³⁴ (1832) is a study of twenty-three of the most prominent and virtuous of Shakespeare's female characters categorized under the headings "Characters of Intellect" (Portia, Isabella, Beatrice, Rosalind); "Characters of Passion and Imagination" (Juliet, Helena, Perdita, Viola, Ophelia, Miranda); "Characters of the Affections (Hermione, Desdemona, Imogen, Cordelia); and "Historical Characters" (Cleopatra, Octavia, Volumnia, Constance of Bretagne, Elinor of Guienne, Blanche of Castile, Margaret of Anjou, Katherine of Arragon, Lady Macbeth). In terms of genre, it falls somewhere between literary critical study, reverent ode, and philosophical treatise. It does, however, isolate female Shakespearean characters and use them as exemplars of these various characteristics, reflecting accordingly upon their actions in the context of their plays; because of this, and because Jameson often goes into extensive detail about the action of the play, the process of criticism does become almost adaptive. Further, although it is not directed towards a juvenile audience (in fact, the format of the introduction as well as many of the claims made within suggest that though women are probably the primary intended audience, the work will not have fulfilled its real potential unless it is received by members of the less fair sex), Jameson's work is an important step in the consideration of the development of nineteenth-century "family Shakespeares" as conversant with moral and educational development and ideas about female creative power which then reflect back on the paired notions of childhood.

As is the case with most nineteenth-century works which appropriate Shakespeare for their own purposes, the front matter of Jameson's *Characteristics* is as interesting and informative as the body of the text itself—and the two are in particularly fascinating

³⁴ *Shakespeare's Heroines* was added to later editions of the text, but the simplicity of the original title implies Shakespearean authority in a way the later addition obscures.

conversation here. Jameson's introduction is exceptionally valuable because of its unusual form and style and how it is thereby distinguished from the more analytical tone of the book's main content. The introduction is written as a dramatic dialogue, set in a library (like in the Lambs' preface), between a woman, Alda, and a man, Medon.³⁵ This unconventional application of the dramatic form demonstrates an acute awareness of the function of genre which undoes some of the more restrictive adaptive practices of the Lambs' prosifying, restoring the confident female voice in preparation for the analytical discussion of strong women that follows. The exchange between these fictional interlocutors situates the serious work the text hopes to perform within an ongoing conversation (one in which gender plays an important role), acknowledges its own limitations and forestalls possible argumentation, and even incorporates Shakespearean and performative elements as a way of anchoring the work to its revered subject.

The exchange opens with Alda's question, "You will not listen to me?" Given the gendering of speaking and listening found in Shakespeare's works and, historically, as traced in this chapter, in adaptations of his works (as in the Lambs' envisioned brothers dispensing measured doses of censured Shakespearean wisdom into the ears of their attendant sisters), as well as expectations of female critics in the period, this question and its phrasing are particularly provocative. She echoes Prospero, assuming a position that is at once defensive and aggressive, and in doing so establishes the material which will follow as a challenge to the reigning ideas about how women should be considered both as characters in and as readers of Shakespeare's texts. Alda is rational, articulate, and focused in a way that her characters are not always and her essays then need not be. Her exasperated plea to "talk like reasonable beings," reads like one that might come from one of the very Shakespearean heroines she admiringly analyzes. Medon plays

³⁵ Alda and Medon originate here, and recur later in Jameson's work.

devil's advocate, in the most contentious masculine way, and with flirtatious condescension. Their exchanges in this respect are both Shakespearean, and very grounded in their historical moment. They also take advantage of the dramatic format to comment implicitly on the primacy of performance to the communication of arguments, the function of Shakespearean characters, and the definition of gender more broadly. Alda's commentary on her book, and her rebuttals of Medon's criticisms and questions are all acutely aware of the role of performance in the exchange, even to the extent that they frequently call upon Shakespeare (and other poets) to do some of the rhetorical work. Alda refuses to continue with her explanations unless Medon will agree to lay aside his "mock airs of gallantry" (10), his hollow performance of a willing and genuinely interested male counterpart; he offers to listen to her "with all the deference which befits a gentleman when a lady holds forth on the virtues of her own sex" and quotes from Thomas Randolph's "In Praise of Women in General," which echoes, in a number of significant if indirect ways, *Macbeth*:

He is a parricide of his mother's name,
 And with an impious hand murders her fame,
 That wrongs the praise of women; that dares write
 Libels on saints, or with foul ink requite
 The milk they lent us.

Yours was the nobler birth,
 For you from man were made—man but of earth—
 The son of dust! (qtd. in Jameson 9)

The excessiveness of Medon's boorish attacks is a rhetorical strategy employed by Jameson to emphasize the reasonableness and logic of her own various approaches. "How could you," he

demands, “choose such a threadbare subject?” (11). Here again the male voice combines false deference with utter devaluation of the project; fortunately, Jameson’s puppetry allows Alda’s extensive responses to leave Medon disarmed and clearly defeated, both rhetorically and in the larger view of the import of the project’s style.

The introduction’s closing line, an arguable echo of Miranda’s repeatedly pronounced attendance, is Medon’s: “I am now prepared to listen in earnest” (lxi). The “now” here suggests that Alda’s extended introductory narrative argumentation, buttressed as it was with the grotesque condescension of Medon’s “[t]hen tell me, (as a reasonable woman you will not be affronted with the question,) do you really expect that anyone will read this little book of yours?” (10) has against all odds accomplished something, if only the conquest of a passive, attentive, masculine ear. The strategies of Alda and Jameson in achieving this triumph depend upon many of the same principles established early in this work as characterizing the performative agency of the mimetic child; only by acknowledging the weakness of her initial position and then building from it by engaging in a theatrical exchange, mimicking the practices of both Shakespeare and his women, and both demonstrating and arguing for the creative capacity of women is the work successfully justified and its characters given the floor.

The format of this introduction is uniquely dependent upon gendered questions of performance, subtly invoked in Shakespearean adaptations. This development, though, as well as Alda’s triumph over Medon, is indicative of the larger scale liberation of woman readers, and women generally interested in Shakespeare, an appropriate preface to the emancipating exemplification of individual female characters. Seemingly functioning as a very thinly veiled mouthpiece for her creator, Alda comments:

It appears to me that the condition of women in society, as at present constituted, is false in itself, and injurious to them,--that the education of women, as at present conducted, is founded in mistaken principles, and tends to increase fearfully the sum of misery and error in both sexes; but I do not choose presumptuously to fling these opinions in the face of the world, in the form of essays on morality, and treatises on education. I have rather chosen to illustrate certain positions by examples, and leave my readers to deduce the moral themselves, and draw their own inferences. (Jameson 14)

Jameson's approach here (the sentiments of which recall those of Mary Wollstonecraft, briefly mentioned in Chapter Three) is fascinating in its initial vehemence, calling explicit attention (albeit through a fictional speaker) to current social and educational conditions for women as false, injurious, miserable, and in its subsequent retreat into a more neutral generic space, and a shifting of the burdens of morality to the reader. That her device for challenging the constitution of the condition of women in society should be Shakespearean women, extracted from contexts in which they are in danger of being subdued, overshadowed, upstaged, strangled, or otherwise oppressed by their male co-characters and author, and carefully categorized, and that she then explicitly offers a parallel independence to readers to use her illustrative examples as points of departure for forming their own responses to pressing social issues for women, supports her arguments for the appropriateness of these figures as relevant models of character and plays upon the connection between acting and action. It also brings the issue of the performativity of the mimetic figures that originate in Shakespeare, and the idea of Shakespeare as associated with children (who are eventually paired with women via empowered vulnerability), into Jameson's precise historical moment, poised between the Romantic and Victorian eras.

The gendered opposition which defines and enlivens the rhetorical interactions between Alda and Medon is paralleled in the introduction's preparation of the reader for the consideration of various Shakespearean women. Within the categories, head-to-head match ups are proposed between the heavyweights of each gender: for passion, Juliet is brought up against Othello. For parental lamentation, it's Constance versus Lear. What is Lady Macbeth, "with all her soaring ambition, her vigor of intellect, her subtlety, her courage, and her cruelty," Medon wonders, "compared to Richard III?" What she is, according to Alda, "is a woman," and what the comparison shows is more than just literary—it is "the essential distinction between masculine and feminine ambition—though both in extreme, and overleaping all restraints of conscience or mercy. Richard says of himself that he has neither pity, love, nor fear: 'Lady Macbeth is susceptible of all three' (27). Susceptibility, weakness, and other negative character traits are as important to Jameson's project as the more noble qualities like those of the "purely ideal" Miranda (208), because such flaws allow for a more personal connection between reader and subject, as well as (more subtly) opening up opportunities for a critique of the systems within which such women are contained. Although Jameson is able to divide her subjects into categories, "they are not stuck up, like the cardinal virtues, all in a row, for us to admire and wonder at—they are not mere poetical abstractions—nor (as they have been termed) mere abstractions of the affections" (32). Jameson's isolation of these female characters, her consideration of them as representative of particular real-life characteristics, is dependent not only on their completeness and apparent truth, but on the complexities which accompany their femininity. Rather than being trapped within a limiting patriarchal structure, these women are, in Jameson's conception, complete emotional performers, whose embodiment of the emotions to which all readers are susceptible—pity, love, fear—make them that much closer to truth, and that

much more effective both as dramatic characters whose imitative models are their own audience, and as objects of emulation.

The divisions of *Characteristics of Women*, and the transitions between them, suggest that the opposition—here (and elsewhere) gendered—of moral exemplitude with imaginative freedom, and ultimately with truth (just as will recur in Cowden Clarke’s stories) informs not only the concept of Jameson’s project, but also her take on particular characters, and interestingly, the relation of one to another, though they might have nothing in common but being Shakespearean women. In her section on “characters of the affections,” for example, Jameson introduces Desdemona by comparing her with *The Winter’s Tale*’s Hermione; where Hermione’s character is “addressed more to the imagination,” Desdemona’s targets feelings, and neither is offered up as an oversimplified moral vehicle.

The tense moments in Act V of *A Winter’s Tale* which fill the space between the revelation of the statue of Hermione and her glorious resurrection, colored by the painful hope of Leontes’ yearning (which might be construed as delusion in a less fortuitous situation) are exemplary of Shakespeare’s interest in the relationship between life and art (addressed in my first chapter in the context of Mamillius as the mimetic artistic product of his father, as well as in my attention to Mary Shelley in the next chapter), appropriately mediated here through the indelible image of woman on display, functioning as both punishment and reward. Like the gender play resulting from the Elizabethan acting pool and its enhancement of the irony, comedy, and complexity of moments like Rosalind as Ganymede practicing courtship with Orlando, the notions of performance and the relation between life and art are nuanced—an actor plays a live woman who plays a statue who will come to life (but only after the requisite admiration of her lifelike qualities)—and depend, as Jameson suggests, upon vivid and faithful

imaginings. As Leontes begins more and more fixedly to note the statue's lifelike quality, the motion in its eye, he suggests that they as viewers are "mock'd with art" (5.iii.65). It is this capacity for mockery (at least in part)—a crueler mimesis—which draws the attentions of these female authors. Where the Bowdlers and Lambs in their adaptive practices and apparatus are expressly concerned with the truthfulness and integrity of the relation between their works and those of Shakespeare, both Jameson and Cowden Clarke are more concerned with the autonomous reality of their women, in order that readers might better relate to and understand them, and therefore either "draw their own inferences" from the proffered illustrations of "the various modifications of which the female character is susceptible, with their causes and results" (Jameson vi-vii), or derive both entertainment and moral edification by means of imaginative yet still textually grounded tales.

In Jameson's introduction, Alda expresses an appreciation for Shakespeare's characters, and accounts for their being more suitable to her project than people from history or her own experience, in her assertions that they "combine history and real life; they are complete individuals, whose hearts and souls are laid open before us...in forming our opinions of them, we are influenced by our own characters, habits of thought, prejudices, feelings, impulses" (23). Their worthiness, then, is multi-faceted: they are historical and lifelike, but also carefully crafted and with performed interiorities available for analytical consideration. Further, their livelihoods are dependent upon their status as dramatic character and the reader or audience member's inclination to complete the character by filtering the author's creation through the kinds of personal lenses Jameson lists above. The argument that Shakespeare's fictional characters are somehow more believable and more true than actual historical figures may perplex (it does Medon, momentarily), but Alda's point is that "enormities" of certain historical women—

”perfect scarecrows and ogresses”—allow us to “hug ourselves in our secure virtue, and thank God that we are not as others are,” whereas the “consistency and truth” of Shakespeare’s portrayal of wicked women “leave us no such resource—they frighten us into reflection—they make us believe and tremble” (30).

It is unsurprising, then, that Hermione, in her physicalized stoicism, and her status as art so lifelike she comes alive before our eyes, is a subject of interest for both Jameson and Cowden Clarke, who will follow her and supersede her in the emancipation of Shakespeare’s women from their restrictive texts. “All that can render sorrow majestic is gathered round Hermione,” Jameson writes, whereas “all that can render misery heart-breaking is assembled round Desdemona” (31). Hermione inspires veneration, Desdemona pity. Despite pulling the women out of their original context to make them into models—reifying to some extent, Hermione’s time as a statue—”O, thus she stood,” Leontes opines; “[e]ven with such life of majesty, warm life,/ As now it coldly stands, when first I woo’d her!” (V.i.34-6)—Jameson is ultimately concerned (as her original title suggests) with breaking down the characters of these women as if they were real people. In her comparison of Hermione and Desdemona she creates an image of both women as surrounded; around them are assembled, gathered, as at a queen’s court, a mysterious something which from readers and audience members evokes sensation, sensibility. She would have them be at once performers, statues on display for the purpose of evoking viewer sentiment, and real women who readers might strive to be like or to learn from.

The introduction’s evident attention to questions of gender and performance, as well as its passive but nonetheless assertive articulation of the importance of her project in the development of women’s social and educational statuses, represent ideals with which Jameson (like others before and after her, including Cowden Clarke) also invests the mimetic nature of her

various females. Miranda exceeds other admirable Shakespearean heroines in various categories—Viola in “tender delicacy,” Perdita in “ideal grace,” and Ophelia in “simplicity” (107) (here too her process is comparative)—and as demonstrating “how completely the purely natural and the purely ideal can blend together” (208). This blending, in Jameson’s argument, can be attributed to the innate mimetic tendencies which define Miranda’s character, in spite of her isolation (particularly since *The Tempest* is a play in which performance is so essential, and Miranda, even in her name, but more particularly in the dialogues discussed above, is characterized as Prospero’s work of art). Jameson notes that Miranda has been placed by Shakespeare “between the demi-demon of the earth and the delicate spirit of the air” (208); of course she is referring here to Caliban and Ariel, but she also calls attention to Miranda’s liminality, her status as existing in a vaguely defined space between earth and air. Jameson is very focused on Miranda’s naturalness, the purity resultant from her isolation—a “pure child of nature³⁶,” “unsophisticated,” but also “delicately refined, . . . she has never caught from society one imitated or artificial grace” (208). From society, perhaps not, but Jameson is also careful to note that a significant portion of Miranda’s education can be attributed to “Ariel and his attendant sprites . . . present[ing] before her pageants of beauty and grandeur” and to the music of the “very air” (209). “She retains her woman’s heart, for that is unalterable and inalienable, as a part of her being; but her deportment, her looks, her language, her thoughts—all these from the supernatural and poetical circumstances around her, assume a cast of the pure ideal” (210). What Jameson prioritizes in Miranda as an ideal—an exemplar of passion and the imagination—are those characteristics which also define her as a mimetic child. In highlighting her status as a child of nature, and the imitative and imaginative processes by which she attained such

³⁶ See Chapter One for further association of Shakespeare, children, and performativity and the concept of the “child of nature.”

supremacy, Jameson reinvigorates Miranda's independent performative power—the exact same tendencies that were shown to have been curbed in the Lambs and Bowdlers' Shakespeares—, links that efficacy to her childlike character and worldview, and allows the original Shakespearean suggestion of these strengths to be played out in her argument. That she includes an extensive passage of directly quoted dialogue—and that the selected exchange is that in which Miranda speaks with Ferdinand and specifically denies her Father's direct command by offering up her name, and her hand in marriage—further argues that Miranda's independent performance is essential to her role as a Shakespearean heroine “to be wondered at.”

Although, as Auerbach notes and as the analyses attest, Jameson values Shakespeare's women based on their capacity for autonomous performance (particularly since her form employs the isolated consideration of characters to allow them to serve as potential models), she is nonetheless unable to extricate either the characters, or women in general, entirely from their relations to men. The power of Alda's oracular tone in her statement, “[a] time is coming, perhaps, when the education of women will be considered, with a view to their future destination as the mothers and nurses of legislators and statesmen, and the cultivation of their powers of reflection and moral feelings supersede the exciting drudgery by which they are now crammed with knowledge and accomplishments” (44), for example, is at least somewhat undermined by the argument for their education being grounded in their projected statuses as mothers and nurses of people who matter. Mary Cowden Clarke, too, defines the heroines in relation to the circumstances of the world around them—“scene, event, and associate”—and most notably, their familial role. The first four stories in Volume 1 are “Portia, the heiress of Belmont,” “The thane's daughter,” (the history of Lady Macbeth), “Helena; the physician's orphan,” and “Desdemona; the magnifico's child.” Though other titles focus on other familial relations

(“Viola, the twin”) or situations which emphasize character features other than family³⁷ (like “Hermione, the Russian Princess), this prevalence at the opening suggests the integration of character with parental antecedent, a linking which grounds the characters in their textual origins, and in a parallel mimetic move, makes that originary link essential to the readers’ understanding of them—at least at first impression.

For Cowden Clarke, though, this is not so much about parental control as it is about plausible “interesting speculation” (v). Her own articulation of the “design” of the work, initially published in 1851, illustrates both the premise of the collection and its emphasis on juvenile formation of adult character and personality; the stories attempt to

trace the probable antecedents in the history of some of Shakespeare’s women; to imagine the possible circumstances and influences of scene, event, and associate, surrounding the infant life of his heroines, which might have conduced to originate and foster those germs of character recognized in their maturity, as by him developed; to conjecture what might have been the first imperfect dawns of that which he has shown us in the meridian blaze of perfection (vii)

At the end of this statement Cowden Clarke offers two readings of the same idea; the image of originating and fostering “germs” which will reach maturity is biological; both Jameson and Cowden Clarke express Victorian sensibilities in their efforts at understanding their subjects through categorization and labeling, origin histories, and analysis, and here Cowden Clarke suggests that the influences of the world around us—what make characters, and indirectly, real people, the way they are—are a scientific process. Each of the *Girlhood* accounts begins with an

³⁷ Other titles include: *Meg and Alice*; *the Merry Maids of Windsor*; *Isabella*; *the Votaress*; *Katharina and Bianca*; *the Shrew*, and *the Demure*; *Ophelia*; *the Rose of Elsinore*; *Rosalind and Celia*; *the Friends*; *Juliet: the White Dove of Verona*; *Beatrice and Hero*, *the Cousins*; *Olivia, the Lady of Illyria*; and *Imogen, the Peerless*.

epigraph drawn from its play of origin, and concludes with the line with which its central character will introduce herself in Shakespeare's text, a formal expression of the mimetic child's process of imitation and independent creative variation. Each volume also includes a section entitled "Passages in the Plays in relation to Facts, Names, and Sentiments, with which it was requisite the tale should accord." These quotations serve, in Cowden Clarke's view, as evidence for the plausibility of her wholly imagined histories, and as anchors to the Shakespearean text. Cowden Clarke's unusual generic approach, at once tied to the text as a child to its parent, places her firmly in the series of adaptors and writers considered throughout this work as themselves demonstrating tendencies of the mimetic child, and also making use of genre to change the status of characters and consequently to comment on the status of those readers to who relate to them.

She then reiterates the conception of her project, this time in the Romantic language of bardolatry, curiously blending the processes of emotional and personal development of a woman, with the drafting process of a literary character. It is unclear whether the perfection here belongs to the female characters, or to Shakespeare himself in his creation of them, and though she asserts that love and not presumption led her to undertake the project and invokes Shakespeare's own voice (through that of the authoritative Theseus in approving the rude mechanicals' play) as her "voucher that '[n]ever anything can be amiss / When simpleness and duty tender it" (vi), there is still a sense that these "imperfect dawnings" might in fact be more useful to us, or at least better sources of "pleasant fancy," and entertainment than the untouchable heroines, blazing in their mature perfection. Paired as this explanation is with the more scientific one above, she appeals to the Victorian interest in evolutionary history and universalizes the characters in posing the question of their origins.

That she seeks to represent the women in their youth, and as influenced in their development by the observation and replication of their surroundings, and that she employs in order to do so an unusual form which goes out of its way to present itself as grounded in the text yet which has nonetheless what George Gross calls a “very tenuous connection with the characters and incidents of Shakespeare’s plays” (42) suggests an important variety of connections to concepts discussed earlier in this chapter and relating to mimetic children, and performing parents, and the extension of these ideas from Shakespeare’s plays, through various adaptive processes, into the resulting products.

Cowden Clarke’s own relation to Shakespeare is somewhat detached, at once clinical and casual, a far cry from the Lambs’ groveling condemnation of their own “imperfect stamps.” She offers the concrete textual links of her closing lines and appendices and beyond those, relies upon imagination and the hope of pleasing; the works of both Jameson and Cowden Clarke, whether because of their historical situations, or the evolution traced here of adaptation as connected to education, morality, and fancy, are infused with far less anxiety than those earlier adaptations. There has been criticism of these relationships, though, and of their sources—and interestingly, yet another division of imaginative freedom and moralistic didacticism. Where Auerbach sees the “immortal vitality” of Cowden Clarke’s female characters overwhelming their roles as “moral vehicles” (*Woman* 211-212), for example, Gross is much more critical of the moralistic tendencies of her project: “[t]he didactic purposes of the tales go beyond mere teaching about the motivations and characterizations of Shakespeare’s women: they clearly intend the inculcation of various moral lessons through exhortation, precept, and example” (40). Gross argues that the primary focus of Cowden Clarke’s moralizing is on redressing the inadequacies of Victorian sexual education, promoting virtue, and warning against sexual

dangers. The “fictionalized imaginings with dramatic confrontation” which she employs as vehicles are contrasted by Gross with Jameson’s interpretations which, though “morally tinged,” are “at least, clearly based on the incidents and dialogue in the plays” (41).

What Auerbach and Gross do agree on, though, to some extent, is the role of the imagination—both her own as creator, and that of her various characters—the free play of fancy as creative force—in Cowden Clarke’s stories, which Auerbach calls “a series of ingenious novellas...somewhere between the spiritual history of the bildungsroman and pre-Freudian case history” (*Woman* 212), and which offer “a novelistic ‘subtext’ to Shakespeare’s female characters” (Thompson and Roberts 82). Cowden Clarke, with her independent authorship of the concordance to Shakespeare’s plays as well as various articles and essays, and her collaborative work (with her husband and others) on *The Shakespeare Key* and a complete works edition, is recognized as “one of the earliest professional women writers on Shakespeare” (preceded of course by Jameson) (Thompson and Roberts 3). Her conscientious relation to Shakespeare’s text is an important facet of this work, particularly given her familiarity with the language of the plays from her work on the concordance, and places her within the tradition of adaptors considered in this chapter, and also makes clear her deliberate designation of *Girlhood* as free from the scholarly demands of accuracy and strict adherence to the text. Cowden Clarke presents *Girlhood* idyllically as having been written “in all the glow of having finished the sixteen years’ labor” of the concordance,” and contrasts the “pure imagination and sentiment” of the tales with the “strict verbal work” of that more laborious volume (iv-v). The vibrant creative purity of the project, in opposition to the severity of her scholarly work, the relief which she so clearly feels, suggests an authorial emancipation which parallels that of her characters. For Auerbach, Cowden Clarke exceeds even Jameson in her salvation of Shakespearean women through the provision of

rich lives for them independent of their original context. Further, Cowden Clarke's characters are necessarily immortal; their deaths, whether or not they experience them in Shakespeare, cannot be part of the girlhood stories. Like that of the Bowdlers and the Lambs,³⁸ Cowden Clarke's work emphasizes relationships between parents and progeny, and specifically mimetic interactions, both as thematic material evident in the plays and made use of in her adaptation, and also as a larger metaphorical framework for understanding the adaptive process (particularly when dealing with a cultural monolith like Shakespeare) and the effects of this parental influence on the relation in the final product between form and content.

Unlike the Bowdlers and Lambs, though—because Cowden Clarke is more concerned with imagination, entertainment, and a variety of implicit messages, than with textual fidelity—Cowden Clarke frees herself from Shakespeare's patriarchal authority, though she does state that “minute pains” have been taken to render the characters “accordant with the dramatist's perfect delineation” (v-vi) and in doing so, uses the material of the texts to argue for female creative power. Sarah Annes Brown argues that it is “[o]nly in the gap between text and intertext [that] the full subversive force of [Cowden Clarke's] championing of women and resentment of male-dominated society emerge; she repeatedly engages in antagonistic struggle with Shakespeare's male characters, even with Shakespeare himself” (96). Brown is focused in particular on Cowden Clarke's recurrent representation of “male sexual delinquency,” and her use of doubles—“frequently faulty male characters of her own invention who seem to throw the good qualities of the original Shakespearean heroes into relief, but who in fact may undermine them” (96). The importance of these—especially the notion of doubling, in the way that Brown uses it, and in a

³⁸ Clarke attributes her “affectionate veneration” for Shakespeare to her early exposure to the Lambs *Tales*.

broader sense which encompasses mimesis and performative parenting (and looks ahead to Chapter Three's discussion of doubling in the nineteenth-century novel)—is addressed below, but in bringing focus to the heroines in childhood, and placing thematic emphasis on moments of motherhood and even childbirth, Cowden Clarke returns to and complicates notions of childhood which begin in the late eighteenth century, and evolve through intersection and interaction with gender, education, and performance, as traced through earlier adaptations.

Emphasis in these later adaptations is often placed by their (openly) female authors upon many of the very ideas which were shown to have been editorially buried by writers like the Lambs and Bowdlers. Thompson and Roberts recognize the “striking scenes of sex, violence, and death” found in Clarke's stories, but even more deserving of consideration is the attention to childbirth—another taboo subject, which frequently combines the three mentioned above, but which also signifies the real and ultimately independent work that women do as creators. Where in Shakespeare childbirth happens offstage, and where in the Bowdler's adaptation we are not even allowed to hear about Miranda's grandmother's womb, here, the tense scene of Desdemona's birth is recreated; “nature herself aid[s]” Gratiano in his attempts to revive his sister from her swoon (which results from the traumatic knowledge of her beloved's misapprehension of her physical situation with her brother): “in the imperious demand to bestow life, the young girl was recalled from her death-like trance. Pang succeeded pang; each throe was followed by another” (302). As the men stand helplessly by (as Brabantio is wont to do), the mother, with nature as midwife, brings her daughter into the world.

Complicating this further is the fact that Clarke repeatedly pairs the birth scenes of what will eventually be Shakespearean children, with the deaths of pre-Shakespearean father figures, sometimes linking them not only temporally—as if space had to be made in the world for the

new entry—but causally. As Erminia delivers Desdemona, for example, her “old blind father had tottered, disregarded, to a corner of the room, where he had come to the terrible half-knowledge of his daughter’s secret” (since despite her efforts she was unable to “stifle her groans” enough to prevent his hearing). Given that her marriage, and thus the legitimacy of her situation, was secret (Brabantio wanted to wait until the death of his disapproving father; this paternal death begins the story, freeing the young man from “intolerable bondage” [Cowden Clarke 257]), the “thought of shame, dishonour, disgrace” resulting from his half-knowledge leads to an unfortunate series of events; he “clasped his hands, bowed his head, yielded to the stroke, and died as he sat” (302-303). Lest we miss the significance of this moment, Cowden Clarke reiterates that “he had expired in the very moment which had just given birth to his grandchild” (264). The precise significance, though, is less obvious; while it may seem at first a chastisement—secret pregnancy can kill your dad!—the father’s absolute weakness (an extreme version of Brabantio’s in *Othello*), his misinterpretation of her position as unvirtuous (a precursor of Othello’s unfounded suspicion), and the fact that even upon learning of her father’s death, Erminia is more concerned with her estrangement from her husband—as in *Othello*, “the thought of the husband surmount[s] that of the father” (306)—all present the situating of the death of the father in such close proximity to the birth of the child as an argument for the view of the heroines as independent creators who then mirror the work of their female authors in ways which Henrietta Bowdler and Mary Lamb were unable to practice. Where Brabantio was inflated in the Lambs’ tale from a somewhat ineffectual but still respected aging politician to a centralized figure of authority, here the paternal figure is barely coherent; he is both blind and disregarded; he totters; and the very idea of his daughter’s sexuality, and its being linked to productivity leads to physical breakdown and ultimately death. In the face of this death, though, is Erminia’s “radiant smile,” and her

comment, “Hark! It is mine—It is my child!” (265). In Hermione’s story too, their child is born when “they [are] still in the bitterness of their grief”; Cowden Clarke is careful to reassure us, though, that the lucky mother “could not have had a sweeter source of comfort and consolation, than the little Mamillius. He was a gentle-tempered fondling child, with a fund of quiet spirits and imaginative fancy” (386). Mamillius, who features prominently in Chapter One as a Shakespearean mimetic child, is also defined here by the power of his imagination, and rendered immortal (saved from his father’s destructive suspicion) by the story’s theatrical frame. In both cases, the fathers’ deaths become immediate and irrelevant history in the face of the mother-child relation, and the undeniable fact of the mother’s role in creating the child, allowing for the association between the security of maternal legitimacy (in the face of the persistence of paternal anxiety), and larger questions of truth and representation.

Cowden Clarke is also interested, like those adaptors who’ve preceded her, in the role of mimesis in the formation of juvenile character; hers is a curious process, though, since her product is itself mimetic, but it also attempts to document the mimetic processes by which people might come to be who they are. Cowden Clarke demonstrates in *Desdemona* the phenomenon of child development based on parental influence in terms of parental performance and children’s mimesis; because of what she was “accustomed to see[ing]” in her mother (her “yield[ing] in silence even to that which she did not acquiesce, her avoidance of what she “tacitly seemed to agree to” and eva[sion of] what she would not object to) the little *Desdemona* “insensibly acquired just such a system of conduct” (279). Cowden Clarke even characterizes this “silent passiveness” as a process of “condemn[ing] and set[ting] aside by act—or rather by non-performance” (279). In not instilling in her child “the unflinching candour which ought to belong to goodness and greatness,” she failed to “invest...her daughter with a panoply that would have

proved her best protection against the diabolical malignity by which she was one day to be assailed, and borne her scathless through the treachery which wrought her fate” (279). Thus the character of Desdemona—the entire trajectory of her fate—is given a grounding in her childhood impulses to see and reproduce. Desdemona, like Miranda, also feels mimetically; it is not only empathetic, because, like the da capo aria, it is a process of observing a tendency in others, and then making that tendency one’s own in performance. Cowden Clarke attributes Desdemona’s rarity to “exquisite tenderness and sensibility,” lively imagination, and the dynamic fullness of her heart, all of which contribute to her mimetic mode of emotional relation: she did not merely pity unhappiness, but shared it. “She not only deplored, and commiserated suffering, she made it her own; she so warmly, so entirely, interested herself in that which affected those she loved, that she became affected in a similar manner” (297).

The characterization of Desdemona’s mimetic development and the potentially fatal danger of inadequate—and specifically non-performing—parental models (a neglect elevated to the level of the horrific in Victor Frankenstein, as will be seen in the next chapter) is one of the many features which help to distinguish Cowden Clarke as at the endpoint of the trajectory of adaptors featured in this chapter. Just as Ziegler’s problematically oversimplified suggestion of the interchangeability of children’s independent reading of Shakespeare with parentally assigned bible study fails to note the association of free imagination with Shakespeare and the reading of the Bible with morality, structure, and parental control, the division of rigid moral instruction and imaginative free play and categorizing of texts as one or the other is itself false. The Lambs’ and Bowdlers’ works both complicate this distinction by offering, in the former, moral lessons under the cover of fanciful play, and in the latter, a surprising allowance for the imaginative potential of most of Shakespeare’s original texts, but filtered through a moralistic censorial lens,

and by expressing in both an ironic discomfort with the (re)productive agency of women. As attitudes towards Shakespeare and towards women (in hard-won distinction from children) as readers, and as editors and adaptors of Shakespeare evolve, opportunistic parallels emerge between female characters—now heroines, as opposed to just secondary women—and woman writers as seizing new opportunities for independence and productivity by separating themselves from the patriarchal structures which have hitherto defined and controlled them, whether male characters, fraternal co-editors (or co-optors), condescending potential readers, or Shakespeare himself. The persistent emphasis on the themes established early in this chapter—mimetic children, performing parents, child as art and child-bearing and -rearing as artistic process—suggests the enduring significance of the mimetic child as a defining figure in understanding the evolving intersections of Shakespeare, performance, and parent-child educational and developmental relations through the nineteenth century. That Lootens also turns to “the bible itself” to convey the deep domesticity and “sacred power” of the “(suitably expurgated) ‘Family Shakespeare’” (78), indicates both the importance and the potential controversy of these adaptive processes and products, and her image of the dramatic entrance of “King Shakespeare” and his daughters into the home highlights the convergence of theatricality and the domestic which will define the role of the mimetic child in the nineteenth-century novel.

Chapter Three: Of Mimicry and Monsters: The Mimetic Child and the 19th-Century Novel

I found myself similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom I read, and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none.

-Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.

-Homi Bhaba, "Of Mimicry and Man"

This thing of darkness I / acknowledge mine.

-*The Tempest*

Frankenstein furnishes an ideal introduction to the concept of mimetic monstrosity and childhood in nineteenth-century novels because of its systematic dependency on mimetic issues. Both the novel and its (anti)hero Victor Frankenstein function theatrically, with Victor inclined toward the dramatic and interested in creative energies and the comparative questions of mimesis (reality-art relations, and how they are conceived of theatrically); his project is mimetic in nature, and his creation, in the absence of parental guidance (but still his "father's" son), depends upon his mimetic impulses to arrive at a performatively defined sense of self. Given the novel's historical positioning, and the development of the figure of the mimetic child as traced in this work from Shakespeare into the twentieth century, the omnipresent anxiety over education and the burden of parental responsibility in *Frankenstein* present significant opportunities for understanding the nineteenth-century novel as a space in which progenetic mimesis and performativity, elevated to the level of the monstrous, become significant means of literary communication. Unsurprisingly, critics writing on *Frankenstein* over the years have fixated on the phrase "hideous progeny," taken from Mary Shelley's introduction to the 1831 third edition

of the novel, in which she bids said progeny “go forth and prosper” (173). The descriptor has been applied in meaningful isolation to studies of adaptations of the novel, of the relationship between Mary Shelley and her father William Godwin, and of Shelley’s own struggle with the conflicting demands of the assertive imagination and traditional female propriety. The convergence of parenthood, responsibility, and monstrosity circulating between the novel’s thematic interior and its external domains of author and genre, reflected in the ubiquitousness of the epithet, is also the axis around which this chapter’s arguments about the mimetic child in *Frankenstein* and other nineteenth-century novels revolves.

I begin by situating Mary Shelley in the role of mimetic child to her father William Godwin, who is himself in constant thrall to both Shakespeare and his own ambivalence toward the power and performativity of the theater (fueled by his desire for and failure to achieve success as a playwright) and of theatricality more broadly in life and literature. This reading of the Godwin-Shelley relationship allows for a recognition of Shelley’s subsequent independent integration of Shakespearean and theatrical allusion and sensibility, including the reflection of (anti)theatrical anxiety in the connection between Victor and his creation; their respective roles as performing parent and mimetic child affect the novel’s narrative development through the use of textual echoes, and treatments of storytelling, tableaux, and framing. I also appeal to the postcolonial theories of Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, and the explicitly related work of modern sociologists Caterina Satta and William Corsaro on the play of children to establish the importance of mimicry and performative difference in colonial situations and educational practices which then inform nineteenth-century representations of children and performative difference. Finally, extending this otherness to questions of size and perspective, I trace the mimetic child figure from *Frankenstein* into the work of the Brontës and Bram Stoker, where

child characters as strange others gain domestic, social, and narrative agency through imitative means.

Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus, opens with an imploring epigraph drawn from Book X of *Paradise Lost*: “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man? Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?” Adam’s doleful questioning is followed by a dedication page which “respectfully inscribes” the work to “William Godwin, author of Political Justice, Caleb Williams, &c.” (Shelley 3-4). This dedication, deferential but not emotional, and following as it does the tortured blame of progenitor by offspring, acknowledges the inevitable but not uncomplicated connection between Shelley and her notable father, and in doing so, links the fictional representation of parent-child relations to their real world correspondent, and prefaces the novel’s impending treatment of ideas prominent in Godwin’s own work, particularly with respect to education, genre, and theatricality.³⁹ In an 1824 letter responding to his reading of a now unknown play by Shelley, Godwin writes, “[t]o read your specimens, I should suppose that you had read no tragedies but such as have been written since the date of your birth. Your personages are mere abstractions, the lines & points of a mathematical diagram, & not men and women” (Marshall 107). Charlene Bunnell’s suggestion that this display of parental encouragement might result at least in part from Godwin’s “own prejudice against the dramatic genre” might seem spurious, were not its language so strikingly similar to that which Godwin employs in the describing the limitations of drama as a genre in the preface to his 1830 novel *Cloudesley*; where “the writer of fictitious history has leisure to ripen his materials,” the dramatist is “confined” by the obligation to “put down the words that his characters shall utter,” without that “peculiar and enviable” accompaniment, available to the fiction writer, of his own

³⁹ Pamela Clemit’s essay, cited below, looks at the more political, philosophical, and ideological echoes of the work of Godwin, and of Mary Wollstonecraft, in *Frankenstein* and *Matilda*.

comments, which “explain the inmost thoughts that pass in the bosom of the upright man and the perverse” (9). Godwin's spontaneous reflection on drama as a genre—somewhat curious given that *Cloudesley* is a novel—argues that the drama is capable only of “sketches scarcely half made / up,” and distortions of human passions and abstract “diagrams” of characters designed to fit within the constraints of plot and the “abrupt and violent catastrophe” (8). That this short preface should be focused on contrasting the virtues of the work at hand with the complications of another genre, suggests both Godwin’s awareness of the significant interrelation of the two genres, as well as the tenacity of his frustrated preoccupation with the theater. His criticism of drama here is revelatory of his personal consciousness of and anxiety about theatricality in all its diverse contexts—the live Romantic stage, a tendency in the novel, and the performativity of sensibility and of social interaction—including such institutions as education and marriage—in what Godwin repeatedly calls the “theatre of the world” (6).

Godwin’s intersecting interests in children, education, publishing, and the theater, on political, literary, and personal levels are represented in his various works, and help to promote the discrete images of children as characters, as readers, and as people. Having published his famous works *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams* in the early 1790s, Godwin began writing and publishing children’s books at the turn of the century as a means of supporting his family. William St. Clair notes that while it is likely Godwin would have preferred to continue his serious philosophical and political work as well as longer fiction, his shift into literature for children was “in no way a compromise with his previous aspirations”; it was instead a “new way of advancing the principles to which he had devoted his life,” since “*Political Justice* is a theory of progress, both an explanation of how it occurs and a recipe for accelerating it,” and in order for progress to happen, children must “share and adopt the insights which lie behind the

recommended morality” (166). David O’Shaughnessy makes a similar argument about the significance of Godwin’s dramatic work; his edition of Godwin’s plays and his accompanying critical monograph both aim to “consider the notion of theatricality in relation to Godwin’s political project,” recognizing the effect on his writings of the link between Britain’s theatrical culture and its political climate in the period, which allows his “plays, novels and philosophical writings [to] be seen as part of a continuous train of thought.”⁴⁰ O’Shaughnessy goes out of his way to defend Godwin’s dramatic work, attempting to redeem the plays from their critical neglect (or censure), placing great emphasis on Godwin’s reverential attitude towards tragedy, and on his desire to write a successful tragedy as “of the highest importance to him and his political project” (3).

Godwin’s first performed play, *Antonio*, O’Shaughnessy attempts to reclaim from the “indifference or scorn of biographers” to deem it “an essential text in understanding [Godwin’s] shifts in thinking, as well as a “brave attempt to reclaim the stage for serious drama” (15). What he fails to emphasize, however, is the fact and influence of Godwin’s failure. Despite his solid (if not revolutionary) retrospective case for the importance of one kind of writing in the progression of a writer’s ideas, it is equally important to recognize that public and critical scorn is itself integral to a public figure’s ideological development, particularly given Godwin’s concern with the idea of fame (a point O’Shaughnessy makes repeatedly) (6). He is ultimately forced to concede that none of what he has said makes the plays “neglected masterpiece[s],” and the best that even he can do for *Antonio* is to deem it “not extraordinarily bad,” in “a period of relatively poor quality tragedy” (103). He does acknowledge *Antonio*’s failure, even including references to the *Critical Review*’s comments that the play “drew no tears, excepting those of the author and

⁴⁰ http://www.pickeringchatto.com/monographs/william_godwin_and_the_theatre

his friends,” and that it “affords a melancholy addition to those already on record, of men of unquestioned abilities miscalculating the extent of their mental powers” (105). Charles Lamb—Godwin’s friend and professional associate—wrote of the Drury Lane audience of *Antonio*, “I believe at that instant, if they could have got at him, they would have torn the unfortunate author to pieces” (322). But O’Shaughnessy is so quick with his “complex, individual reasons” (5) for this failure, and so focused on his conviction that an appreciation of Godwin’s plays “is essential for a fuller understanding of Godwin, both as a literary writer and a political thinker” (5) that he neglects to consider the complexity and individuality of the pathos, cruelty, and violence of these scenes of audience rejection, and the substantial mark they are capable of leaving on the literary psyche.

In *Empty Houses*, David Kurnick considers the novelistic resonance of theatrical failure in the works of Henry James, Thackeray, Eliot, and Joyce; these writers, he argues, translated dramatic frustration into narrative accomplishment, consequently lining the “interior spaces” of their novels with “longing references to the public worlds they would seem to have left behind” (4). Though Kurnick’s focus is on later writers, applying his model to Godwin’s career fills in those gaps created by O’Shaughnessy’s strained efforts to argue for the importance of the works themselves without acknowledging the significance of their reception. Like the antitheatricality Kurnick identifies in the novels of James and company, Godwin’s discomfort with drama (as represented in the Preface to *Cloudesley*, as well as the evident uneasiness with performativity in novels like *Fleetwood*) can be seen as “an expression all at once of distress at a personal theatrical failure,” as well as at the state of theatre at their present time (Kurnick 10). For Kurnick’s authors, this included the “increasing remoteness of theatrical values from the inward-

looking fictional worlds they were constructing, and at the existing theater's assimilation of precisely the 'novelistic' values they had turned to the theater to escape" (10).

Of course, Godwin's theatrical world was very different from Joyce's, or even Thackeray's; Godwin's theatrical efforts narrowly precede the beginnings of what Kurnick and others before him have called "the gradual 'novelization' of the theater," a set of dramaturgical and ideological changes which together represent a movement toward interiorization and "the new prominence of the domestically oriented and psychologically absorbed subject presumably called into being and sustained by the realistic novel" (7). In his efforts to redeem Godwin's "not extraordinarily bad" drama, O'Shaughnessy casts *Antonio* as a "brave attempt to reclaim the stage for serious drama" from the popular spectacles of "vacuous visual performances" (7). He argues that the tragedy, like Godwin's novel *St Leon*, can be considered an anti-spectacle, not only in form, but in incorporated warnings about spectacle as a "morally corrosive force" to the individual, the family, and society in general (O'Shaughnessy 15). That Godwin continued to aspire to theatrical success in spite of his dislike of spectacle and evident mistrust of theatricality more broadly suggests an inherent and inescapable integration of performative ideals into his philosophical and political projects. It is apparent that for Godwin, as for many other authors (including Mary Shelley), the question of what it means to write for the theater and to stage a play, is a generic application of larger questions about truth and representation, and the nature of fiction and its ability to move society towards a more meaningful contemplation of human nature and action. Godwin's titling of his novel on the tyrannies of government *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* is a perfect articulation of this ambivalent convergence; the claim to straightforward and truthful representation—situated ad infinitum in an ongoing present by the "Are"—butts provocatively against the promise of a jaunty picaresque in the tradition of

Robinson Crusoe or Gulliver. It is not a question of confusion, but of the capacity of different kinds of writing to do different kinds of work, successfully. Godwin casts the generic impulse of *Caleb Williams* as a sort of inward spiritual compulsion, writing, “I had always felt in myself some vocation towards the composition of a narrative of fictitious adventure”;⁴¹ in the work, he proposes to teach “a valuable lesson, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterized” (55). The narrative opens with Caleb’s designation of his life as a “theatre of calamity” (59). The persistent intrusion of theatricality in Godwin’s writing is mentioned above, and in the context of *Caleb Williams*’ deliberate truthfulness and its status as a novel, highlights Godwin’s interest in genre and its relation to notions of interiority, and the extension of those to the corresponding spheres of public and private.

Emily Allen also considers the production of the nineteenth-century British novel in theatrical terms, with particular focus on categories of literary distinction; she argues that novelistic representations of theater bolster the “novel’s claims of distinction” by providing a “generic foil,” but also “foil the novel” by highlighting, with “spectacular bodies on stage and tradition of embodied viewing,...the very materiality [the novel] would like to forget” (7). One of Allen’s acknowledged predecessors is Joseph Litvak⁴², whose related argument posits that theater “both inhibits the novel’s ideological work by putting the crowding masses back in mass culture, and drives it by providing the negative example against which the novel defines its own interior realm” (9). Both authors, therefore, are concerned with the characteristically nineteenth-century juxtaposition of the private (reading, the novel as representation of domestic enclosure

⁴¹ Kurnick’s section on how “writers’ failed theatrical projects became charged sights for their thinking about the efficacy of the artistic in general” (24) is entitled “the Vocation of Failure.”

⁴² Others are Elaine Hadley and Nina Auerbach whose *Private Theatricals* features in my second chapter.

and subjective interiority) with the public (the print market, the theater). This is in part because of a predominant concern with surveillance—Litvak begins with Foucault, proposing that the nineteenth century’s novelistic tradition “unsettles the distinction between a society of spectacle and a society of surveillance” (1). Thus Litvak’s arguments rely upon a series of divided pairs: theater and novel, public and private, and at the core of his work, the distinction between what he refers to variously as carceral, panoptic, or paranoid theatricality, and the carnivalesque, or the (less potentially disruptive) “ludic” spectacles of surveillance.

Kurnick, Allen, and Litvak all deal with writers and texts whose sentiments towards theatricality are at the very least tense; it is therefore refreshing to identify in Joanna Baillie an unrepentant but nonetheless influential dramatist. Baillie’s *Plays on the Passions* (a set of plays which offers a comedy and a tragedy each in illustration of “the stronger passions of the mind”) is preceded by an “Introductory Discourse” in which she expresses sentiments similar to Godwin’s about the difficulty of dramatic writing, but in the interest of arguing for the intrinsic value of a stage play which strikes and interests its spectator, though the play be “of small poetical merit,” and the spectator unwilling or unable to read (66). Baillie’s untroubled investment in staged drama as a genre is of particular interest given the Romantic phenomenon of the closet drama, its origins in questions of interiority versus exteriority and the ability of various genres to represent “things as they are,” and its contrasting of the “exploration of human emotion with the spectacular special effects” popular on the nineteenth-century theater scene. This, coupled with her unusual status as a successful female playwright in the midst of these anti-theatrical sentiments and the intensity of her focus on questions of artistic representation of human nature and emotion, make Baillie an especially useful figure in navigating the artistic

relations between Godwin and Shelley and considering their pertinence to the concept of the mimetic child.

William Brewer notes that Baillie “seems to have exerted a major influence on Shelley’s conception of the ruling passions,” and observes echoes of *De Montfort* both in Shelley and in Godwin, who makes explicit his own indebtedness in his comment that his novel *Mandeville* was “further improved by some hints” in the play (O’Shaughnessey 155). The juxtaposition of Godwin’s previously discussed comments on the responsibilities of the author of a drama with a similar dissertation in Baillie’s “Introductory Discourse” (which predates *Cloudesley* by more than 30 years) offers yet another significant parallel; Baillie describes the advantage of the poet and the novelist in representing “their great characters from the cradle to the tomb. They may represent them in any mood or temper, and under the influence of any passion which they see proper, without being obliged to put words in into their mouths, those great betrayers of the feigned and adopted” (24). According to Godwin, “the writer of fictitious history has leisure to ripen his materials and draw out his results one by one, even as they grow up and unfold themselves in the ‘seven ages’ of man. He is not confined, like the dramatist, to put down the words that his characters shall utter” (*Cloudesley* 8). It seems likely, given their dates and the direct acknowledgement of Baillie as an influence, that Godwin wrote this preface with an awareness of Baillie’s theories, and that that awareness would carry into Shelley’s writing. That both writers—one a dramatist, one (in this context) a novelist—should be so concerned with the difficulty of the spoken word, a character’s verbal self presentation, free of narrative qualification, suggests a recurrence in generic form of that same question of the precise mimetic capacities of art.

Shelley's kinship with Baillie, highlighted by Judith Pascoe in an essay on the plays *Proserpine* and *Midas*, extends beyond (without abandoning) the kind of generic tension which links Baillie and Godwin, into an unexpected presence of the imagery of children in the writing of both women. The figure of Frankenstein's creature as a distorted mimetic child accounts for a large portion of this chapter's argument, and Baillie's appeals to the child figure situate that reading persuasively. The "Introductory Discourse" turns repeatedly to the propensities of children to delineate the "ideas regarding human nature" which inspired Baillie's dramatic project, since tracing the "varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the characters of men" is, "much more than we are aware of, the occupation of children," despite the fact that generally, their capacity for "[p]enetration is but lightly esteemed" (2). Casting the child role of keen and underestimated observer (and ultimately mimic) of human nature, Baillie exemplifies the nineteenth-century conception of the child which allows for the possibility of this work's arguments about the mimetic child, its association with Shakespeare, and its importance as a literary device in *Frankenstein* and elsewhere.

Baillie also notes that the pleasure we receive from art is "derived from the sympathetick interest we all take in beings like ourselves," an interest which extends into man's avid pursuit of the "discovery of a concealed passion" or the "varieties and progress of a perturbed soul" (7). Like heightened observation, this propensity for deep knowledge of those around us appears very early in children; "it enters into many of their amusements, and that part of them too, for which they shew the keenest relish. It tempts them many times, as well as the mature in years, to be guilty of tricks, vexations, and cruelty..." (12). Gradually and with considerable skill, Baillie connects her observations on the quality of human nature to a particular kind of generic theory she seems to promote; While the study of human nature is a "powerful auxiliary" to poets,

novelists, historians, and philosophers, it is, to the dramatic writer, “the centre and strength of the battle” (23).⁴³ Images of children continue to color her prose:

Formed as we are with these sympathetick propensities in regard to our own species, it is not at all wonderful that theatrical exhibition has become the grand and favorite amusement of every nation into which it has been introduced. Savages will, in the wild contortions of a dance, shape out some rude story expressive of character or passion...Children in their gambols will make out a mimick representation of the manners, characters, and passions of grown men and women, and such a pastime will animate and delight them... (26)

The view of children in Baillie’s dramatic theory, keenly exercising and relishing the mimetic process of observation and performance, potentially cruel and vexatious, but also implanted within us by God Almighty, demonstrates an ambivalent tension⁴⁴ which is implicit in the works of Godwin and Shelley, particularly in those moments where education and performance converge or overlap, with mimesis taking center stage.

Other critics have recognized the link between genre, interiority, performance, and childhood. Marshall Brown’s essay “*Frankenstein: A Child’s Tale*” rigorously mines the novel for instances of childishness, from Shelley’s introductory association of composition with childbirth to the “infantile character of the monster’s desire for a female companion” (160), en route to his compelling argument that “the infantile and primitive character of the gothic novel

⁴⁴ The ambivalence is also present in Baillie’s poetry for and about children. “To A Child,” for example, addresses an “imp,” an “urchin sly,” both “round and sleek” and “soft and fair” whose every move is “infantine coquetry all,” suggesting that very combination of art and artlessness that becomes powerful in the nineteenth-century child figure. The poem echoes the powerful performativity of the child too, in the poet’s description of the child’s antics as: “[a] mimic warfare with me waging.”

[is] its most distinctive contribution to the history of the human imagination” (162). Brown states that the gothic narrative differs from the roughly contemporaneous literary fairy tale “in being written not for children but as if from within their sensibility,” governed by “undirected and unregulated emotions” (162). While “adults play by the rules,...children allow games to get out of hand,” and Frankenstein’s monster is, ultimately, an “all-embracing figure for the childishly unregulated spirit” (162). Though Brown’s argument is of course more complex than these snippets indicate, the basic association of the gothic novel as genre with “a childish understanding of the world,” (162n) particularly when paired with Joanna Baillie’s attention to children as playful, observant, and potentially cruel mimics highlights the importance to this chapter of associations of childhood, performative perspectives, and genre. Like the mimetic child, the gothic novel “is simultaneously terrifying and playful” (Brown 162), due to the dependencies of both on performativity and a childlike perspective.

This detailing of Baillie’s theories, and the extension to Brown’s argument, embellishes the tracing of the Godwin-Shelley lineage, raising specific concerns which circle back to the *Cloudesley* preface, and particularly to Godwin’s use of the phrase “scarcely half made / up” and its subsequent (and precedent) trajectory; the idea (though not the specific phrase) appears as cited in his criticism of his daughter’s work, and then resurfaces in the preface in a more general defamation of the genre. The phrase quotes Richard III’s opening denunciation of himself as “curtail’d,” cheated by nature, “deformed, unfinish’d, sent before [his] time / Into this breathing world scarce half made / up” (I.i.18-23).⁴⁵ In another apparently tangential stream of commentary, Godwin idolatrously cites Shakespeare as the exception to the rule of deficiency

⁴⁵ Godwin’s placement of the line break seems to be a semi-subtle hint to his reader to recognize the reference; the meter does not break there, and it’s unlikely that any edition would have divided it as such.

applied to dramatists (his “conceptions” being “drawn from the profoundest abysses of thought,” seemingly “supplied to him by the plastic principle to which the universe is indebted for its harmonies” [8]) so it is perhaps only mildly remarkable that his short preface includes four direct references to Shakespeare’s works. More impressive is his evident attachment to the phrase as a depiction of dramatic characters, both in general and in Mary Shelley’s work.

In a curious editorial turn, this already reverberating phrase eventually finds its way into *Frankenstein*; as Walton reflects somewhat blithely on the joys of friendship, Victor responds with characteristic darkness, referring to the friend he once had and his sense of total personal loss. The 1818 edition begins modestly, with Victor (“the stranger”) agreeing with Walton “in believing that friendship is “not only a desirable, but a possible acquisition” (Shelley 16), but in the 1831 edition he is far more specific in his assessment of the value of companionship: “we are unfashioned creatures,” he says, “but half made up, if one wiser, better, dearer than ourselves—such a friend ought to be—do not lend his aid to perfectionate our weak and faulty natures.”⁴⁶ It seems likely that this is an instance of Percy Shelley’s revising Mary’s “sentimental, rather abstract, and generalized rhetoric” into the “stilted, ornate, putatively Ciceronian prose style about which so many students complain” (Mellor, “Choosing” 163). But regardless of its precise author, the revision carries with it a number of significant associations; first, the timeline allows for the possibility that this is a direct response to Godwin’s criticism of drama as a genre, and an explicit acknowledgement of the extent to which his persistent direction of it towards his daughter influenced her composition of *Frankenstein*, a novel which is dependent upon characters who seem “scarcely half made up” or like abstractions, and certainly upon theatrically distorted emotions, and theatricality more broadly.

⁴⁶ Shelley “Pennsylvania Electronic Edition,” Letter 4.7, 1818 edition.

Godwin's depiction of dramatic characters continues as follows: "It is as if the shadows and first hints of men, drawn by a novice, walked out of their frames, before the substance and filling out of a man were added to give them reality; or, as if the figures of Prometheus were made to act their parts on earth, without waiting till / the fire from heaven came to inform them with a living soul" (8). Though there is no explicit connection made, it is difficult in reading this passage not to identify an awareness of *Frankenstein*; the invocation of images of shadows and framing, the figure of a novice drawing soulless life from the rough outline of man, the reference to Prometheus—all this recalls very specific elements of the novel. Indirectly, then, Godwin draws a parallel between the figure of the monster, and the abstract notion of a character in a drama. Thus the inclusion here of this phrase and concept of half made up men recalls not only Shakespeare, but also the relevance of the personal and literary relations between Shelley and her father, and suggests an implicit defense of the theater which is reflected in the potential identification of both the author and her "hideous progeny" as mimetic children.

Shelley and Shakespeare

The tying together of Shakespeare, Godwin, and Shelley using this phrase which invokes both dramatic characters in general and Shelley's great and monstrous creation poses Mary Shelley as mimetic not only in her relation to her father and her literary responses to his criticism of the theater, but also in her ongoing expression of Shakespearean allusion and sensibility. Even the above-quoted summoning of Richard III in Victor's assessment of friendship, besides drawing in that moment upon the complex history of that phrase in the Shakespeare-Godwin-Shelley succession, continues to reverberate throughout the play. The Shakespearean "echo...of

another monster”⁴⁷ is observed by Mark Loveridge, who recognized its extension into other realms of the novel, like shared character names. Frankenstein’s cousin, love, and briefly, wife, shares the name Elizabeth with Richard’s niece whom he woos in Act IV. “The ostensible reader of the narrative” is Walton’s sister Margaret, to whom his letters are addressed, while Queen Margaret views the actions of Richard III from a similarly detached perspective. Loveridge also points out that Henry appears as both Richard’s downfall, and Victor’s closest friend (killed by the monster), and that there’s a connection to be made between the double murdering of juvenile innocents by the monstrous central character. Given that Loveridge points out these parallels in a *Notes and Queries* brief, he concludes little more than that Richard III, while not as present as Milton’s Satan, is “none the less lurking quietly in the text” of *Frankenstein*. This quiet lurking in the novel of Richard III, along with other characters like Hamlet, exemplifies the conception of Shelley’s novels as “pulsating with a vitality drawn from a wide spectrum of dramatic literature that inevitably includes Shakespeare” (Petronella 121) and thereby emphasizes the mimetic propensities of Shelley’s prose.

Shelley’s Shakespearean sensibilities and her use of the theater as motif also reflect the tendencies of the mimetic child in that da capo aria style of independent creative variations on an imitated parental theme. According to Pamela Clemit, though Shelley “consistently wrote within the framework established by her parents’ concerns, she was no mere imitator of their works”; rather, she “extends and reformulates the many-sided legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft in extreme, imaginatively arresting ways” (Clemit 26). Shelley responds sadly and belatedly to Godwin’s criticism in a letter to her friend Maria Gisborne in June 1835, recalling the “fit of enthusiasm” to write for the stage in which she found herself after seeing Kean perform upon

first returning to England; she writes, “my father very earnestly dissuaded me – I think that he was in the wrong – I think myself that I could have written a good tragedy” (Jones 98). Here Shelley voices another type of theatrical frustration—that of missed opportunity and resentment at her father’s perhaps selfish and generically prejudiced discouragement of her efforts. Thus considering *Frankenstein* as in conversation with Godwin’s own ambivalence towards theatricality and his criticism of Shelley’s dramatic work highlights the productive interrogation of these prejudices and their transmutation through hereditary transmission and the filters of Mary Shelley’s own anxieties about parenthood, childbearing and raising, and female creative potential.

These various subjects and filters are themselves exemplary of Shelley’s Shakespearean tendencies; Shakespeare’s plays consistently rely on parenting and parent-child relations not only for basic plot and character situations, but also for communication of larger ideas and for structural integrity. This work’s first chapter considers the use of Shakespearean children as representative of concerns related to reproduction, legitimacy, and continuity, but since Shelley herself characterizes her own work as her child, recalling my second chapter’s discussions of the complex parallels between parenting and artistic creation, it is clear that this creative anxiety extends beyond the interior world of the characters. Morris Henry Partee identifies the “typical Shakespearean notion that children mirror their parents and thus provide not only a comfort in this world, but also a hope for immortality after death” (54), a notion which leads to and supports the link between mimesis, and artistic generative power. In the case of *Frankenstein*, though, the interior thematic function of this question of (dis)continuity is of particular interest because of its portrayal of the disastrous results of parental negligence. Roughly two of the novel’s three volumes, according to Ellen Moers, “deal with the retribution visited upon monster and creator

for deficient infant care” (218). Having identified Frankenstein as the father of the monster, George Levine calls the novel “an examination of the responsibility of the father to the son” (Levine 20). Levine further argues that the result of Victor’s disregard for his son is the complete destruction of his natural family, “[t]he family is an aspect of the self and the self cannot survive bereft of its family” (21). This arguable claim is valuable in considering the connection between Frankenstein and his creation, the impact of their relations on the novel and its characters, and even the significance of the author and *her* father. But it is also an important link to Shakespeare’s parallel uses of corrupted familial bonds to suggest disintegration of character, and reproductive anxiety; in both authors, these concepts are tied up with femininity. If the monster is Victor’s only offspring, and the murderer of both the other male Frankensteins and Victor’s potential mate he is also apparently the end of the family line. In his sexless and autonomous reproduction (monstrous in its unnatural mimesis), Victor “steal[s] the female’s control over reproduction” (Mellor 274) an act which attempts to assert independent creative control, and in doing so, to alleviate anxieties about the creative power of women and related masculine insecurity about legitimate paternity. In Shakespeare, of course, Prospero repeatedly addresses characters by calling into question their mothers’ fidelity, leading Miranda eventually to respond, in a line discussed at length in “Family Shakespeares” and edited by both the Lambs and the Bowdlers, “I should sin / to think but nobly of my grandmother. / Good wombs have borne bad sons” (I.ii.117-119). In a moment of textual echoing characteristic of the mimetic child, Miranda echoes Prospero, recalling his earlier comment which called into question his own paternity; this questioning of the nature of familial relations reverberates throughout Shakespeare, and into the nineteenth century and the kind of conflicted possessiveness we see in “hideous progeny.”

King Lear displays a similar combination of unsettled familial relations and consequent self-disintegration. Lear's hasty reconfiguring of his family structure in the casting out of Cordelia leads the fool to refer to a time when Lear "madest [his] / daughters [his] mothers," by giving them the rod, and putting down his own breeches. (I.iv.170-71). Later, encountering his traitorous daughter (in this case, Goneril), Lear asks, seemingly bewildered, "Are you our daughter?...Does any here know me? This is not Lear. / Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?...Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (I.iv.216-227). Like Victor Frankenstein, Lear questions and regrets his own parentage because of the apparent monstrosity of his offspring, driving home the final lament, no doubt echoed by parents everywhere: "[h]ow sharper than a serpent's tooth it is / To have a thankless child!" (I.iv.287-8). Lear further extends this conflicted parent-child relation by directing his anger at his daughters directly towards their reproductive futures; Lear's curse of Goneril is a more violent and vehement version of that with which Prospero threatens Ferdinand. Both of their first impulses are to suspend reproductive potential; Lear implores nature to convey into Goneril's womb sterility, to "[d]ry up in her the organs of increase," adding the essential clause that "[i]f she must teem," her child be created "of spleen," that it may be "a thwart disnatured torment to her!" (I.iv.281-2)⁴⁸. In *Frankenstein*, Victor, after "eliminating the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power" (Mellor 274), expresses his unwillingness to create a female companion for his creation in terms which clearly suggest his discomfort with the possibility of female independence, desire, and above all, reproductive powers; here is yet another link, like those explored in "Family

⁴⁸ A parallel malediction is found in Lady Anne's wish that if Richard III ever have a child, it be "abortive...[p]rodigious, and untimely brought to light," such that its "ugly and unnatural aspect / May fright the hopeful mother at the view" (I.ii.21-24).

Shakespeares” (and darkly present in most of Shakespeare’s works) between anxiety over female reproduction, biological and creative.

The father-son relation, of course, is equipped with a different set of problems, since it is more difficult for the parent to separate himself from the child along gender lines, as Lear so readily does in immediately attacking Goneril’s potential maternity. The connection between the unconventional father-son pair in *Frankenstein*, though shirked and nightmarish, is deep and inseverable, to the extent that a “commonplace of criticism of *Frankenstein* [is] that the hero and his antagonist are one; the monster and Frankenstein are doubles, two aspects of the same being...the monster can be taken as an expression of an aspect of Frankenstein’s self” (Levine 18). Levine even recognizes an increasing resemblance and dependency between the two, such that “by the end Frankenstein pursues his own monster, their positions reversed, and the monster plants clues to keep Frankenstein in pursuit” (18). (This same chase Kitti Carriker describes as Frankenstein’s “frustrating pursuit of this gigantic version of his own shadow” [38]⁴⁹.) The reversal which Levine identifies is vocalized when the monster returns, after the death of William, to threaten Victor for shirking his duty of creating a mate; the monster addresses his creator: “[s]lave, I before reasoned with you, but you proved have yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master;--obey!” (116). The reversal is not only that of pursuit; there is also a distinct shift in power relations, and in the assumed roles of creator/created, master/slave. That the monster suddenly gives orders and calls his parent his slave his striking; more so is that fact that all his

⁴⁹ This mention of shadows, placed into this context, echoes Godwin’s use of the term to describe express his view of the limitations of dramatic characters, and looks ahead to specific invocations of shadows in works like *Villette* and, of course, *Peter Pan*.

threats hinge upon his demand that Victor create for him a feminine counterpart. Thus, despite his bravado, he is still dependent upon his creator, and appears incapable of independent creative action; further, his attacks, like Lear's, are centered on Victor's generative and continuational powers, focusing first on the complete disaster of his attempted creation, and moving on to William and Elizabeth, representatives of Victor's potential for the continuation of his line. This kind of tension in the parent-child tie recalls the initial interaction between Godwin and Shelley, as well as the fact that when Shelley began the novel she "had been most definitively cast out of the circle of her father's favor" (Hill-Miller 59).

Almost the same but not quite

The monster's development is in many ways an accelerated (and unsupervised) version of standard infant-child progression; naturally, then, having observed basic interaction and taught himself language, he moves on to books. The significance of the novel's documentation of his book learning is found, more than in the particulars of the books he reads, in an incident from his creator's childhood. Although Victor is careful to attest that "no youth could have passed more happily than [his]" (20), he does take the time recount the story of his father's reaction to his youthful infatuation with the works of reputed magician Cornelius Agrippa as an example of the "utter neglect" by instructors of "the many opportunities [to direct] the attention of their pupils to useful knowledge" (21). His father only remarks "carelessly" that the book is "sad trash," and Victor suggests that had his father instead "taken the pains to explain" all the precise scientific reasoning by which he might have arrived at such a conclusion, he would certainly "have thrown Agrippa aside, and...applied [him]self to the more rational theory of chemistry which has resulted from modern discoveries" (22). "It is even possible," Victor continues, that with such a calculated parental redirection, "the train of [his] ideas would never have received the fatal impulse that led

to [his] ruin” (22). Although he attempts to soften the blow by qualifying this as a mere possibility, it is nonetheless an outright placement of blame for the entire disastrous situation (and, really, the novel) on his father, and specifically on his father’s inattention to his education and lack of control of his reading materials. It is also significant that he characterizes his youthful interest in Agrippa as having his “imagination warmed,” a choice of words which suggests a smoldering of juvenile imagination with potential for combustion; that eventual explosion of undirected creative energy finds its monstrous expression in Victor’s experiment with “bestowing animation upon lifeless matter” (an essentialized if melodramatic definition of parenting) (30).

Given the import he places on this causal relation, there is a surprising irony in Victor’s own absolute disregard for the education of his progeny. Completely unsupervised, the monster acquires significant cultural texts, developing his own curricular prescriptions for becoming a functioning member of society, guessing (with surprising acuity) at the scripts to be learned for actors on the world’s stage. For the monster, even the act of reading, performed independently and within the frame of his imagined social scenarios, is an imitative and identifying experience perfectly expressive of the general function of the mimetic child in literature, as well as of some of the larger critical questions surrounding mimesis. The monster reports the process of applying his reading “personally to [his] own feelings and condition” (86). The result of this comparison of model to mimic is that he finds himself “similar, yet at the same time strangely unlike the beings concerning whom [he] read[s],” as well as those “to whose conversation [he] was a listener”; the creature continues: “I sympathized with, and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none, and related to none” (86). In this astute self-evaluation, the monster outlines the logic of understanding developing children as mimetic, and also as being at

once audience and actor, a conflicted yet empowered position which helps to define the complexity of the role.

In her “Three Women’s Texts and A Critique of Imperialism,” Gayatri Spivak attends to the specifics of the monster’s reading material, great scraps of culture, far superior to the works of Agrippa, including *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch’s *Lives*, and Volney’s *Ruins of Empire*. While the creature’s reading of Milton as “true history” is frequently noted, Spivak emphasizes the relevance of these other works (including his comparison of the lives in Plutarch to “the patriarchal lives of [his] protectors”) as the core texts of his “enlightened universal secular” education (265). Characterizing the monster’s self-education, Spivak refers to him as “this Caliban,” an association which has great significance for understanding the role of the monster as mimetic child (and of mimetic children as monsters), and of Victor as performing parent, parallel then to Prospero, but which also (in the context of her critique of empire) brings Shakespeare, performing children, and notions of education and reading into productive collision with questions of postcolonial discourse. There is also a neat textual parallel between the creature’s assessment of himself as similar but also strangely unlike the human subjects of his reading and observation, and Homi Bhabha’s use of the deceptively simple singsong catchphrase, “almost the same but not quite” (126) as descriptive of the colonizer-colonized dynamic. This phrase expresses aspects of his concepts of ambivalence, difference, and mimicry, which transfer neatly from the colonial context in which he situates himself to serve as valuable conceptual tools for other literary and social phenomena. Besides this phrase, which tightly links the mimetic child to the performatively empowered colonial subject, Bhabha, like Spivak, and like Shelley, emphasizes the power of the book (the English book, specifically) to serve as “an insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline” in redefining “wild

and wordless wastes” (163). There is nothing revolutionary in the recognition of the importance of literature as a tool of ideological control, but the relevance and textual engagement here of both Spivak and Bhabha to the monster’s autodidactic reading, and the parallels with *The Tempest* invite a brief consideration of valuable connections, through *Frankenstein*, between tenets of postcolonial theory and important principles of the concept of the mimetic child. I will also extend the discussion of these ideas of Otherness, empowered difference, and performativity, first into analysis of Frankenstein’s monster as descended from Caliban in their parallel roles as mimetic children, and then into consideration of the work of contemporary sociologists Caterina Satta and William Corsaro who appeal to Spivak’s category of the subaltern in their studies of children understanding and defining culture through imaginative play and the imitative development of private spaces to which adults—like colonial authorities—do not have access.

Naturally, the parent-child relationship has often been appealed to metaphorically to express the colonial dynamic, and to reverse this, using Bhabha’s colonial paradigms to frame nineteenth-century representations of children and their parents or educators, brings to this study a gravity which is frequently and unfortunately lacking in considerations of literary works for and about children. Elaborating upon the simplicity of “almost the same but not quite,” what is most valuable about Bhabha’s work for complicating understanding of the mimetic child are the inherent questions of power, and of the privilege of access to such power, in the form of imitation and subsequent independent and uncontrollable creation, available to what post-colonialists would term the subaltern, a designation whose definition allows it to be applied with

equal ease to a child⁵⁰. Also essential to understanding to relevance of Bhabha is the simultaneity of submissive imitative practices (the backbone of education), the inevitable accompanying menacing empowerment of radical difference, and the fact that it is the encouragement of the mimetic impulse—be like me, look like me, talk like me—that enables that independent creative power which becomes threatening.

Bhabha explores the role of mimesis in the colonizing process, arguing that colonial mimicry is “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other,” but that since “in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference,” it also “poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers” (126). Rod Marsh, in a footnote to a lecture on the figures of Ariel and Caliban in selected Latin American literature, clarifies Bhabha’s concept of the “ambivalence” of dominant discourses in his explanation that the ongoing process of colonial construction of a colonized subject’s identity highlights a discursive contradiction: “the colonised subject is not simply imagined as a rough or incomplete copy of the European, civilised subject, but, contradictorily this ‘copy’ is imagined as simultaneously resembling the coloniser (mimicry: a difference almost the same but not quite) and remaining radically different (a menace in a difference that is almost total, but not quite).”



⁵⁰ William-Adolphe Bouguereau’s “The Motherland” (1883) depicts the late 19th century conception of the empire as a stern but nourishing mother figure, and her subalterns as naked dependent but also somewhat menacing children.

Marsh points out that this ambivalence results in a “contamination” of colonial discourse, in that the potential for resistance arises from the very attempt at establishment of a hegemonic identity.

Although the contexts and stakes of the arguments are very different, these basic principles of Bhabha’s are helpful for understanding the analogous functions, power dynamics, and questions of performativity which govern the figure of the mimetic child, particularly its presence in the nineteenth-century novel. The ambivalence towards both children and towards theater, grounded in insecurities about power and the relationship between truth and representation, are addressed in the initial introduction to the concept of the mimetic child. The “da capo aria” premise has also previously been established; this is the idea that the child, in establishing his own independent identity, is inextricably linked to his parent as originary, but assumes a potentially threatening creative power in the development of both his divergent identity and his literary role, an agency still more anxiety-provoking given the historical attribution to children of privileged accessibility to certain otherworldly realms, like the imaginative, the creative, the theatrical, and even more metaphysical boundaries like that between life and death.

Spivak’s association of the *Tempest* and *Frankenstein* in the context of an argument about colonial authority and power is logical given the inextricability, demonstrated in previous chapters, of Prospero’s identification as a parent from his own anxieties regarding creative power and his control over it. Miranda is his great success; he recounts the great effort he has spent as a schoolmaster to shape her into such an admirable form (recognized immediately by Ferdinand as a likely wife and queen—barring, of course, a previously claimed heart or maidenhead). Caliban is his great failure, who, despite all his tutor’s efforts, would take no “print of goodness”; nonetheless, he remains, inevitably, Prospero’s own acknowledged “thing of darkness” (I.ii.334,

V.i.267). Ariel exists in the ethereal space between the other two, an object of pride and affection, but also an indentured servant working off a debt of enforced gratitude; he also has the uncomfortable advantage of being the medium which actively (and theatrically) executes Prospero's elemental control.

The various intersections of *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein* depend upon these same interrelated concepts of parenting, imitation and theatricality, education, and creative or imaginative power. Faced with the task of creating a mate for his monster, Victor considers the responsibility and unpredictability of such an undertaking. His reflections upon the prospect of the dissemination of a nightmare species echo the reproductive fantasy of "peopl[ing his] isle with Calibans," (I.ii.150-1), as he reasons that even if the happy couple "were to leave Europe, and inhabit the deserts of the new world, yet one of the first results of those sympathies for which the daemon thirsted would be children, and a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (114). Besides the somewhat perplexing suggested technicality of Frankenstein's having made his creation (and been planning to make the mate) capable of independent reproduction, his considerations can also be read as expressive of anxiety about creative potential—both that of his child, and that of a female presence—which might surpass his own.

Though this monster is far more restrained, civilized, and rational than Caliban (perhaps as a result of his independent education: where Caliban curses his enforced education, the monster laments his neglect), there are nonetheless echoes in their conversation of that parallel Shakespearean relationship. (Caliban is, of course, another Shakespearean monster who might be viewed as "half made up.") The creature reports that "having remained during the space of several revolutions of the moon in [his] hovel, [he] discovered the names that were given to

some of the most familiar objects” (75); the juxtaposition here of the image of the moon with the acquisition of basic language skills recalls Caliban’s recitation of his supervised language lessons, in which he was taught “how / To name the bigger light, and how the less, / That burn by day and night” (I.ii.334-6). The allusion itself functions like a mimetic child, replicating the original but with significant independent meaning. Here the moon (the same moon which illuminates Victor’s tableaux) oversees the passage of time, almost a friend to the creature, while he discovers the mysteries of language alone.

Shelley’s bestowing upon Frankenstein’s creation a privileged relation with nature in connecting the natural environment to his educational and emotional state also connects his character both to Caliban (who knows the island and its nature intimately), and to the mimetic child and that figure’s association with Shakespeare as a child of nature; the concept of the noble savage embraces all three. As the monster progresses in his knowledge of language, he notes that “the black ground was covered with herbage and the green banks interspersed with innumerable flowers” (79), the blossoming of nature almost heavy-handedly echoing his own. Although the creature is not physically affected by the bleak and barren autumn, his “chief delights” are still the birds, flowers, and “all the gay apparel of summer”; it is when those have “deserted him” that he turns his attention toward the cottagers. That the monster sees various elements of nature as companions and natural disappearance as abandonment suggest both his integration into the natural landscape, and the elements of humanity which distance him from that nature and cause him to experience feelings of supreme isolation—almost the same, but not quite.

After the failure of his appeal to his cottagers, the monster resolves “to fly far from the scene of [his] misfortunes, but asks, “whither should I bend my steps?” and “...how was I to direct myself?” (94). His “travels were long, and the sufferings [he] endured intense,” and he

reports that as he traveled, fearful and hopeless, “[n]ature decayed around [him]” (94). Here his connection with nature extends beyond his intellectual and emotional state, and into the realm of narrative progression. Momentarily, in the face of great disappointment, his story lacks direction, (and suffers a narrative paralysis which echoes his creator’s at the moment of the monster’s birth), a textual decay mirrored in the surrounding nature. Caliban too is portrayed as in a state of suspended animation due to his master’s cruelty; prevented from leadership or reproduction, “confined” and “sty’d” within a rock cell, and having surrendered to Prospero his own connection to the island’s natural elements, this monster is doomed to circle the island in a constant state of surveillance.⁵¹

Though Caliban is his most obvious parallel, the monster, in his apparent natural goodness, eagerness for education, and natural inclination towards subservience (at odds with his simultaneous natural inclination towards the mimetic combination of imitation and imaginative innovation), as well as in Victor’s ideal vision of him before his delivery, is also linked to Miranda. It is perhaps in their mimetic sympathies that the two are most parallel, textually; Miranda “suffer[s] with those that [she] saw suffer,” while the creature reports his response to the emotional lives of his observed cottagers: “when they were unhappy, I felt depressed; when they rejoiced, I sympathized in their joys” (75). The creature is mimetic here not only in his empathic tendencies, but also in his comparability to the figure of Miranda. Already monstrous in form and conception, he becomes more so in the ambiguity of his moral positioning. A character who can be identified simultaneously with both Caliban and Miranda seems almost impossible, and yet here he is; this conflicted duality is the result of the creature’s status as a

⁵¹ *The Tempest*, it would seem, offers a provocative simultaneity of Litvak’s concepts of carceral and carnivalesque theatricalities; which, for example, would Ariel’s performance as a harpy at the banquet meting out justice fall under?

mimetic child, dependent upon allusion, as well as on the juvenile tendencies towards imitative empathic understanding as well as innate cruelty.⁵²

Both these tendencies in both these monsters are also dependent upon their subjectivity to a division of worlds—that which they have independently created or governed, and that in which they are subject to the framework established by their parents or other models. Satta applies Spivak’s categories of subalternity and language to the study of childhood and her argument that children are always “part of two cultures – the child’s and the adults’ – and these cultures are interwoven in different ways across space and over time” (6). In her consideration of these distinct cultures and the ways children’s play becomes a source of power in navigating them, Satta relies on theorists like Spivak, Foucault, and de Certeau, but is also clearly indebted to the more practical work of fellow sociologist William Corsaro and his concept of “interpretive reproduction.” This term, according to Corsaro, captures the innovative and creative aspects of children’s participation in society, and the idea that “children are not simply internalizing society and culture, but are actively *contributing to cultural production and change*” as well as “societal preservation (or reproduction)” (18-9, 4). Interpretive reproduction is comprised of 1) the appropriation by children of knowledge and information from the adult world; 2) children’s production of and participation in “peer cultures,” and 3) “children’s contribution to the reproduction and extension of adult culture” (Corsaro 41).

These sociological theories depend upon a clear separation of the spheres of everyday activity of children and adults. The children Satta observed at play seemed to operate in “another world,” a “parallel dimension” linked with real life, where they were “capable of acting

⁵² For more on the cruelty of children, see Joanna Baillie above, on the potential cruelty of children’s mimetic amusements, the discussion of *Dracula* at the end of this chapter, and of *Peter Pan* in the next.

creatively, understanding each other, and creating an independent culture” (5, 1). Engaging in play requires “accepting the uncertainty of crossing the borders of reality to move within another field run by other rules,” and Satta observes that the adult assistants “reveal an attitude of not wanting to play or an incapacity to play another role with other rules,” (7) an argument supported by the anecdotal evidence of two girls engaged in imaginative play attempting (quite generously) to include one of the assistants, and addressing her as “Mum”—her role in their developing narrative—; she is reported to have responded with, “Why are you calling me Mum?” Here, the play assistant, besides revealing herself to be apparently singularly unqualified for her job, is also demonstrating her “incapacity to exit from her main role...as an agent of a fixed culture which she just has to transmit to children; the girls, on the other hand, by responding with “[i]t’s only pretend!” show their “capacity to enter and exit the roles, creating, recreating, and interpreting the meanings of the interaction” (7). Besides arguing for a distinct division of these realms, Satta emphasizes the agility, energy, and creativity with which the children are characterized as navigating the boundary between them, and then starkly contrasts the adults’ ineptitude. Where the children are active, understanding, and creative in their making of meaning, the adults are unwilling, incapable, unengaged, presumptuous, and dismissive. That the adults “never enter into the play-frame created by the children” suggests not only the prioritized empowerment of the children, but also a reiteration of the kind of privileged access to desirable imaginative spaces addressed in earlier discussions of the mimetic child, as well as the significance of theatrical imagery and the motif of the frame to understanding both these concepts in their context here (Satta 7).

Both Satta and Corsaro highlight the seriousness of real life child’s play as not simple fiction, but a “*way of being* and a way of constructing [children’s] unique culture” (Satta 5).

Besides independent development of imaginative spaces, this process of construction frequently involves juvenile mimicry of subjects from the adult world in the form of role play. Rather than simply imitating adult models, kids “continually elaborate and embellish adult models to address their own concerns,” a process which Corsaro asserts “is primarily about status, power, and control” (Satta 5). All of this—perhaps most especially the attribution of seriousness and power to play as a juvenile imitative practice—is directly applicable to the mimetic child as a literary figure. Chapter One demonstrates the dramatic and literary efficacy which Shakespearean child characters derive from their mimetic tendencies, and these theatrical impulses are inherently tied to these other concepts of distinct worlds and the child’s navigational facility. By operating on a separate plane to which adult characters have limited access, mimetic child characters exploit the liminal space between mimicry of reality, and the failure of that mimicry resulting from the self-consciousness of their literary role, to emphasize themes particular to their contexts as well as to communicate larger ideas about adult-child relations, mimetic representation, and the nature of performance.

The broader treatment of theatricality as a rhetorical device and as a real world phenomenon is a distinct presence both in Bhabha’s writing and in the nineteenth-century novel. Bhabha notes, for example, the exercise of colonial authority through “figures of farce,” and recognizes the emergence of mimicry as a colonial power strategy as a result of a “comic turn from the high ideals of the colonial imagination to its low mimetic literary effects” (126). Bhabha’s reliance upon theatrical rhetoric to characterize the dynamic interactions of the players on the colonial scene suggests both the inherent performativity of such relations, and the larger representational question of the relation between life and art (the foundations of mimesis as a literary and philosophical concept).

Actors in the Busy Scene: The Theatricality of Victor, his Creation, and the Novel

Much of what is important about the theatricality of *Frankenstein* has to do with the relationship between life and art. It is upon this relation, so important to the Romantics, that all theories of mimesis are founded; in the case of the novel, though (and other nineteenth-century instances of monstrous mimetic children), and in the context of this argument, there is the significant additional question of the performativity inherent in parent-child relations. The notion of parents as performers, as well as children as necessarily and naturally skilled mimics has been explored earlier. The shape of this dynamic in *Frankenstein*, though, is such that, as Bunnell writes, all the novel's major characters "blur life and art by creating imaginary worlds or by perceiving the physical world as a stage on which to play out their personal dramas" (37). In this way, the novel suggests the danger inherent in the confusion of the "actual world with an illusory one and of perceiving life as art" (Bunnell 37). This is of course Frankenstein's initial problem, and one which follows him and others throughout the novel. Having severely blurred the bounds of life and art by creating a living being through an laborious artistic (and scientific) process, Victor remains unmoored throughout the novel. As Victor considers the possibility (which is of course an actuality) that William was killed by his creation—"the filthy daemon to whom [he] had given life"—he comments that "no sooner did [this notion] cross [his] imagination, than [he] became convinced of its truth" (48). Shelley's invocation of the imagination here in the instantaneous conversion of fancy to truth suggests Victor's disastrous inability to separate the world of his own creation with the real world which surrounds him; the inevitable presence of the monster in both only compounds this illusive confusion.

Given the importance of both mimesis and theatricality in the novel, it is evident that the anxiety which surrounds the nineteenth-century child figure and the agency attributable to its theatrical tendencies of imitation, imaginative access, and play is elevated in *Frankenstein* to the level of the grotesque. Here, the mimetic child is not only unsettling, not only monstrous in its performance and otherworldliness, but is, in fact, a monster. The processes by which Frankenstein's creation—initially conceived as “a being like [him]self” (Shelley 31)—comes to be, and comes to be defined as monstrous, however, offer a large scale (as he is constructed, of course, of “gigantic stature” [32]) model of the systematic function of the mimetic child in the nineteenth-century novel. Because the monster is such a deliberately (and literally) constructed child figure—the embodiment of the “child as art” idea explored in Chapter 4's discussion of the *Tempest*, though in this case gone wrong (how horribly wrong is really a function of Victor's own neuroses, as will be explored further below)—the tracing of his development from birth through independent education also allows for detailed consideration of the various possible understandings of the concept of mimesis as relates to children and the central argument here.

The principles which govern the division of the adult and juvenile worlds, the role of the imagination in each, and the individual's facility with navigating them through performance, have important parallels with those which distinguish the novel in its early stages of development, in that all these categories question the relations between truth and representation and the role of the individual in this dynamic. It is therefore fitting that the epigraph to Satta's essay is taken from *Robinson Crusoe*, which Ian Watt recognizes as representative of the “growing tendency for individual experience to replace collective tradition as the ultimate arbiter of reality,” a transition which “would seem to constitute an important part of the general cultural background of the rise of the novel” (14). Satta's selected quotation—“I began to speak to him,

and to teach him to speak to me”—calls attention, however, not to this isolated individualism, but to the disruptive presence of others in such a closed system, and to the negotiations of power which must follow and which here and elsewhere (as shown by Bhabha, Spivak, Shakespeare, and others) take the form of educational, imitative, linguistic relations. Watt notes that “[e]ven in language—the medium whereby human beings may achieve something more than animal relations with each other...—Crusoe is a strict utilitarian,” teaching Friday basics like yes and no;” but Friday, Watt is careful to point out, “still speaks pidgin English at the end of their long association” (Watt 69). Despite *Robinson Crusoe’s* epistolary prose style which aspires to journalistic truth, the initial establishment of Crusoe’s relation to Friday is based upon mimetic educative practices and an emphasis on the playing of predetermined roles, both of which are reflected in the novel’s form; as Crusoe, “having learn’d [Friday] English so well that he could answer...almost any question,” begins to question Friday about his country of origin, the narrative shifts into dramatic form (214). “We began the following discourse,” Crusoe states, and the conversation which follows takes the form of a dramatic dialogue punctuated by the speech prefixes for “Friday” and “Master” (214). In this slight narrative deviation, Defoe demonstrates the increasing reliance of the novel in its early days upon theatrical devices and ways of seeing.

Both Litvak and Allen approach the study of theatricality in the nineteenth-century novel with the presumption that there is an inherent anti-theatricality to the novel as a genre. Their arguments that there is rather, or also, a dependency upon the theater are supported in a more specific and allusive way in the form of recognizable indebtedness of Romantic and Victorian novelists to the great dramatists who have preceded them, perhaps Shakespeare in particular. Satta’s invocation of *Robinson Crusoe*—in particular, the educational relationship between Crusoe and Friday—recalls the novel’s undeniable parallels with *The Tempest*, the specific

nature of which are particularly relevant here. Certainly the two works are as clearly alike in plot elements as they are different in style. John Robert Moore claims in 1945 that “no relationship between the two...has ever been pointed out,” and goes on to offer “an outline which is literally and equally true of either plot,” and concludes with a mention of Crusoe’s description of his adventure as “a strange and unforeseen accident...of which the like has not, perhaps, been heard of in history”: “Almost so, but not quite,” writes Moore; “unless one holds that Crusoe excluded *The Tempest* when he spoke of history” (56). Moore’s outlining of these parallels questions Watt’s assertions that writers like Defoe differed from writers like Shakespeare in their use of wholly original plots, and also precedes, if incidentally, Bhabha’s characterization of imitative colonized peoples as “almost the same but not quite.” Rather than being just a coincidence of word choice, though, this connection suggests a valuable parallel between the imitative qualities of literature and the problems of literary categorization.

Theatrical allusion is only one of many ways nineteenth-century novels rely on the theater for their intricate functionality; in Shelley’s case, as in those of other writers, there is an ongoing “affinity for theatrical conventions” (Pascoe 188). Her characters, Pascoe argues, “seem to be self-consciously performing, even at their considerable reserve from actual theaters” (188). Frankenstein and his creation are primary examples of these “self-dramatizing characters,” in their shared and seemingly hereditary tendency toward theatricality (Pascoe 188). Bunnell notes that because Shelley’s use of the *theatrum mundi* motif is more subtle in *Frankenstein* than in her later fiction, it may be an instance of early experimentation; though Victor does not explicitly define his life as a “tragedy” or “drama” as often as, say, Mathilda, he does, she argues, “self-consciously narrate his personal history as if it were a literary construct,” and employ “dramatic devices in his narration,” such that the “very act of storytelling becomes a theatrical performance

in itself” (36). Victor’s worldview is governed by dramatic principles and while narration is not his only performative trait, since he is generally in control of the narrative (with notable exceptions discussed below), the novel’s various theatrical elements are filtered through his theatrical authorial lens.

Narratively, the moment at which Victor reveals (or rather, refuses to reveal) his great discovery is distinctly theatrical. He builds slowly to the moment when suddenly, “a light so brilliant and wondrous” breaks in upon him, and he expresses his surprise that he “alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret” (30). He then plays upon the suspense he has built, pulling back the curtain a little further to reveal the nature of his discovery—the capability to bestow “animation upon lifeless matter” (30)—while keeping his audience on the line. He states that the discovery did not all open upon him at once “like a magic scene,” but this is exactly the effect he works to achieve narratively, extending his control to the point where, relying upon the novel’s formal reflection of the observer/actor convention, he is recorded (we are made suddenly aware of Walton’s presence) as noting the eagerness, wonder, and hope in the eyes of his friend and audience member, which suggest that as dutiful listener he “expect[s] to be informed of the secret”; of course, “that cannot be” (31). He continues, “[I]isten patiently until the end of my story, and you will easily perceive why I am reserved upon that subject” (31). Here Victor, like Prospero, (a connection explored further below) experiments with dramatic narrative authority as he relates his parental biography. He relies upon the inherent tension of the actor/spectator relation, and augments it with the motif of a great secret soon to be revealed, only to withhold the revelation in an effort to maintain audience attention (a highly successful tactic in the case of Walton, since he has gone to the trouble to record the story verbatim) and complete the act of storytelling.

From the inversion of characters like Victor seizing dramatic control, as opposed to being just unwitting players, as well as from the oft-noted connection between creative production and childbirth in the literary and biographical overlap of Shelley's "hideous progen[ies]," emerges another nineteenth-century anxiety essential to the understanding of the intersection between performance (process and product) and representations of and for children⁵³. Related to the anxious recognition of the otherworldly powers of accessibility of children in general, there is a heightened awareness in the period of the power of storytelling. As Bunnell argues, "the layering of teller/actor and listener/audience...heightens the novel's dramatic quality" (38), such that acts of storytelling, particularly in the complex system of layers deployed in the novel, are tied up with performance, the mimetic relation between art and life, questions of identity and selfhood, and power more broadly. Frankenstein's own animated and attentive awareness of the effects of this power is apparent in his observation of the magistrate as he recounts the tale of his horrific progeny; at first his listener appeared "perfectly incredulous, but as [he continued he became more attentive and interested; [he] saw him sometimes shudder with horror, [while] at others a lively surprise, unmingled with disbelief, was painted on his countenance" (138). Victor notes the physical and emotional reactions of his audience as he progresses through his tale—which, it must be mentioned, he is still in the process of telling, to Walton—and is assured of its efficacy.

Bunnell argues that "empowerment through acting and writing is granted almost exclusively to Victor and, to some extent, Walton. Only they," she says, "are able to exert any control over the content...The creature's story, although centrally positioned, is buried within both Walton's and Victor's stories" (39). By this reasoning, though, only Walton and not Victor,

⁵³ Godwin described his early literary efforts as falling "dead-born from the press" (*Caleb Williams* 1832 Preface).

or only Shelley and none of the men, have any control over the content; in the moment of his narrative, the monster has complete control, since the reader, particularly motivated by the sympathy provoked by his story, is likely to become immersed in the story and not focus on its framing or second-handedness. In fact, while it is perhaps difficult for anything about this novel to seem shocking, given the extensive body of critical work devoted to it and its omnipresence in the cultural imagination, there is nevertheless a moment in the text which is truly jarring, for a number of significant reasons. It is not when the creature first opens his “dull yellow eye” (34), but in fact, when he first opens his “straight black lips” on the frigid slopes of Montanvert, to speak to his creator. Their exchange is included herein earlier as evidence of Victor’s theatrical tendencies and the monster’s quite rational speech in response, but also of interest here is the monster’s wholly autodidactic articulateness, and his striking ability to tell an engaging story.

Victor, on the other hand, struggles not only with storytelling, but with various generic constraints, including the omnipresence of narrative demand and theatricality. His initial narrative response to the monster’s animation, before even embarking on the grotesque delineation of his features quoted above, is to pose to the reader a rhetorical question whose primary functions, besides introducing the idea of the results of the experiment as catastrophic, are to suggest that the horror of his creation momentarily suspends his narrative power, and to remind the reader that in spite of the apparently disastrous result, the labor of creation—imaginative, scientific, and ultimately artistic (as well as parental)—has been a process of admirable effort. Rendered temporarily unable to relate emotion, he asks helplessly, “How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form?” (34). The infinitude of his efforts and the goodness of his intentions are emphasized, even in this moment of crisis and narrative paralysis which asserts itself in the form of what

Petronella would call “Victor’s soliloquizing” (124). At this early stage, as he assesses and finds lacking his own mimetic creative efforts, Victor consciously reestablished the role between himself as player and his multilayered readership as rapt audience.

Tension between actor and spectator informs much of Shelley’s work with theatricality in *Frankenstein*. Bunnell’s study of dramatic sensibility recognizes in Shelley’s novels in general an inversion of an important aspect of the *theatrum mundi* motif in that “[h]er characters not only perceive themselves as actors in the drama of life, but also, as in the case of Victor Frankenstein and Mathilda, often assume the ‘role’ of director of that drama, usurping God’s or Nature’s controlling and primary position” (7). As Victor progresses through his early education towards the novel’s grave turning point, he asserts that his “contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy” is grounded in the dubiousness of the imbalanced exchange of “chimeras of boundless grandeur” for “realities of little worth” (Shelley 27). This phrase—“chimeras of boundless grandeur”—might be a description of the notion of theatrical production, and even more specifically, of the Romantics’ troubled relation to it, embodied in the concept of the closet drama⁵⁴. The Romantics’ problem with the theater is a mimetic one, and Victor assumes that same tension between a strong attraction to the theatrical, and an ambivalence about its power and the ways the dramatic manifests itself as the real. In the moment where his grand chimera becomes an “abhorred monster,” Victor questions—but does not abandon—his self-designation as director. Much of the novel’s progression, and its manifestations of character, is about Victor’s attempts to cast his drama; Bunnell observes this too, recognizing that, for lack of “a satisfying domestic relationship,” the monster eventually assumes the role of monstrous villain in which he has been cast, while Victor, “[d]esiring to play the hero of an epic masterpiece, . . . finds

⁵⁴ Vincent Petronella considers the source of Mary Shelley’s literary power to be a fusing of “the best features of Romantic drama with the immeasurable resource that is Shakespeare” (133).

himself instead the villain of a domestic tragedy” (38). Victor is not only the creator of the monster, but a constant manufacturer of drama in the novel. This is of course in part demanded by his role as narrator, but it extends beyond this as well.

The scene of the monster’s “birth” is of course of great importance as it is a pivotal moment in the plot as well as in the reader’s understanding of Victor’s character and its likely subsequent progression. Much has been made by critics like Ellen Moers of *Frankenstein* as an example of “woman’s mythmaking on the subject of birth” (218) and of the opportunity to draw upon Mary Shelley’s troubled experiences with motherhood as a means of complicating understanding of the novel, but the significance of that moment in which animation is bestowed upon lifeless matter extends beyond (while still incorporating) these gendered concerns. Because Victor’s project is inherently mimetic, the initial evaluation of the success of the endeavor is gauged by the reader (and by Walton, presumably) in two distinct but related (especially due to the layers of storytelling) realms of curiosity; first, how will the creation measure up to Victor’s glorified conception of it as a great work of artistic and scientific imagination, and then, what will be its relation to that which it attempts to mimic—natural man. It is immediately apparent that in both cases, at least according to *Frankenstein*, the project is a catastrophic failure. The source of that failure is that misalignment, and the horror of the moment is entirely dependent upon the mimetic impulse which links the creation to both the perfect ideal of what a man should be, and the wondrous image Victor had of his own creation. In his single-minded pursuit of his project—which had “taken an irresistible hold on [his] imagination” (33)—Victor glorifies his future as supreme progenitor. He fantasizes: “[a] new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs” (32). The narrative surge is

grounded in the horrific imperfection of the monster's correspondence to the human form: "[h]is yellow skin scarcely cover[s] the work of muscles and arteries beneath," and "his watery eyes" and "straight black lips" are gruesome mockeries of the human traits they mimic (34). The surprising elegance of his "lustrous black" hair and his "pearly white" teeth only forms "a more horrid contrast with" the malformed parts of his wretched caricature (34). The monster himself later recognizes that the source of his monstrosity is not an isolated aesthetic but a comparative disjuncture, telling Frankenstein, "God, in pity made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance" (88). This continued attention to the body emphasizes the inevitable physicality of the actor as spectacle (addressed in relation to performing children and Peter Pan in Chapter Four), and recalls the persistent Shakespearean anxiety about the resemblance of children to their parents (specifically fathers), seen in Chapter One's analysis of *The Winter's Tale*. The monstrosity of the creature's gigantism is discussed further below, in the section on size and scale, but it should also be noted that the capriciousness and utilitarianism of Victor's decision to make a living being on a freakish scale only because the "minuteness of the parts" otherwise "formed a "great hindrance to [his] speed" (31-2) further characterize his narcissistic creativity and its detriment to his status as parent.

Although the monster is physically horrific as his yellow eye opens, "what follows is more horrid still: Frankenstein, the scientist, runs away and abandons the newborn monster, who is and remains nameless" (Moers 218). This flight (which for Moers represents a larger scale drama of "revulsion against newborn life, and...guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences" (218) is Victor's expression of his perception of the experiment's failure, and also his first major failure as a parent. One of the great ironies of *Frankenstein* is that, despite

Victor's all-encompassing horror and regret, his experiment is on the whole a success. His creation not only lives, it teaches itself to speak and read; it is empathetic, emotional, desirous, generous. Tragically, the monster is a child any parent would be proud of—except that he is hideous. From the opening of his eye, to the moment where, moved by the disappointment of his hopes for companionship, and by vengeance (and a hereditary urge to create—"I, too, can create desolation" [97]), he takes the life of the irritating young William, he does nothing wrong. That the creature's only initial personal transgression is ugliness is one reason he is a sympathetic, and therefore especially interesting, character; another source of this potential sympathy is, of course, his abandonment and subsequent loneliness.

Making explicit the Romantic idolization of the idea of "something ever more about to be"⁵⁵ and its reflection in the importance of dramatic structuring, while simultaneously showing himself to be the dramatist that he is, Victor responds hysterically to the magistrate's calm announcement of some news from home: "The suspense is a thousand times worse than the most horrible event: tell me what new scene of death has been acted, and whose murder I am now to lament" (Mr. Kirwin reassures him that his family is "perfectly well") (125). There is even an echo here of the same kind of imbalance (and ongoing efforts at heightening drama) observable in his first post-abandonment encounter with his creation. "Abhorred monster!" he cries upon viewing him: "Fiend that thou art! The tortures of hell are too mild a vengeance for your crimes!" To this ejaculation, the monster responds, "[b]e calm! I entreat you to hear me, before giving vent to your hatred on my devoted head" (66). Victor's wild, melodramatic language here contrasts starkly with the admirably controlled and rational demeanor of the supposed monster, who acknowledges the chaos of the situation, and then asserts it in theatrical terms: "I am thy

⁵⁵ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979. Print

creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part” (66). The language is at once theatrical and familial; he submits, with a Shakespearean nod to the (albeit questionable) naturalness of their relation, but also demands a particular performance of his father, in order to maintain the stability of their dynamic. Though his origins and his request (that Victor fabricate a mate for him) both skew this relation from any natural path, there is a significant duplicated theatricality in this moment, as the monster recognizes and attempts to subdue his creator’s tendency towards the dramatic, while simultaneously relying upon it to arrive at an understanding of their relationship.

The monster’s dramatic sensibilities result from a seemingly paradoxical simultaneity of presence and absence of his father. In an external literary sense, he inherits these tendencies, since he is at least in part a double of his creator; in the context of the story, and of larger questions of juvenile mimetic performance and education, he is forced by his abandonment to rely upon his innate childlike theatrical ways of seeing as he attempts to educate himself and develop his identity. Levine’s characterization of the monster as “leading an apparently independent organic life of its own and yet irremediably and subtly tied to its creator, re-enacting in mildly disguised ways, his creator’s feelings and experiences” (18-9) is ideal in its recollection of earlier discussions of the function of the mimetic child,⁵⁶ since it is in this combination of being tied to the progenitor, but possessed of a powerful independence, which is nonetheless defined by performative replication of parental (or substitute parental) models.

Despite the monster’s admirable independent efforts at self-education and self-development, the absence of any guiding parental figure, along with the inescapable fact of his abandonment lead to the formation of an unfocused mimetic entity. Just as his body is pieced

together from various corpses, his identity evolves as a patchwork of performances and improvised educational practices. Foraging his education, he relies upon his own mimetic impulses and attraction to theatrically conceived models. After settling himself comfortably in his hovel, taking care of the primary human demands of shelter and sustenance, he proceeds to pursue the mingled opportunities for companionship (if only imagined), education, and entertainment. His first sustained exposure to the family who will become the models for his developing selfhood is through an “almost imperceptible chink”; in a small, bare, white-washed room, an old man sits, “leaning his head on his hands in a disconsolate attitude,” while a young girl is “occupied in arranging the cottage” (72). Eventually the man takes up an instrument to play “a sweet mournful air,” followed by the entrance of a young man “bearing on his shoulders a load of wood” (72). Everything about this introduction—the makeshift proscenium, the variety of characters, the specific description of physical attitude, the business and the props—suggests the setting of a theatrical stage.

Having initially established this stage set, the creature proceeds to reflect upon its technical impressiveness, finding, to his “extreme wonder,” that the resourceful cottagers used tapers to prolong the light, and that “the setting of the sun, therefore, “did not put an end to the pleasure I experienced in watching my human neighbors...The family, after having been thus occupied for a short time, extinguished their lights, and retired, as I conjectured, to rest” (73). Here the monster’s narrative offers precise attention to the remarkable means by which this country playhouse operates, and suggests, in the extinguishing of those lights (and thus of his spectatorship) a distinct closing of a scene.

This rustic theatricality is strikingly reminiscent of Wordsworth’s description in the *Prelude* of his own youthful experiences with the theater, the source of the “girlish child-like

gloss / Of novelty” which attracts him to the great gilded glarings of the London stage; he notes that the “country-playhouse” would in fact have been “some rude barn / Tricked out for that proud use,” and recalls his imaginative immersion in the theatrical spectacle:

...if I perchance
 Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
 In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
 Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
 Gladdened me more than if I had been led
 Into a dazzling cavern of romance,
 Crowded with Genii busy among works
 Not to be looked at by the common sun. (VII.446-57)

Given the extent to which Shelley references both Wordsworth and Coleridge throughout the novel, the connection here is more than merely incidental. *The Prelude* traces the poet’s individual development, and places great emphasis on early imaginative experience, particularly as relates to artistic creation and what Wordsworth calls the tyranny of the eye; the poem also recurrently expresses a tense relation with the theater. Here, struck by the resonance of a moment in his adult life, the poet recalls his youthful immersion in the imaginative experience of the theater, not only akin to but exceeding the wonders of tales of genies. Only in the splintered and jarring reminder of the contained theatrical space as distinct from the world outside is this awareness relished.

For the monster, though, this passive albeit enthusiastic observation is not enough; he is “desirous to make an entrance on the world’s stage...[r]ejected by his creator and spurned by all who see him, he is not only a social outcast, but also an actor with no stage, no script, no fellow

characters” (Bunnell 52). That such an unquestionable connection can be made between the monster’s parental abandonment and consequent social dislocation, and his lack of theatrical equipment is further evidence of the role of performance in parent-child relations and the educational process. In the absence of these dramaturgical (and social) necessities, the monster focuses on creating his own scenarios. He explains to Victor, “I formed in my imagination a thousand pictures of presenting myself to them, and their reception of me. I imagined that they would be disgusted, until, by my gentle demeanour and conciliating words, I should win first their favour, and afterwards their love” (77). Tragically—but also Romantically—the scenes in performance continually fail to live up to their ideal imaginative design. He cannot even maintain his constructed self-image when faced with an actual image; having admired the “grace, beauty, and delicate complexions” of “his cottagers,” the creature’s view of himself in a transparent pool terrifies him.

The natural progression of the creature’s act of visual theatrical observation, is his discovery that his beloved players “possessed a method of communicating their experience and feeling to one another by articulate sounds....the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers” (74). The creature deems communication by language a “godlike science” (a curious designation, given the processes by which he came to be), and “ardently desire[s] to become acquainted with it” (75). He finds this difficult given the quickness of their pronunciation and the lack of apparent connection between words and visible objects; eventually, though, he experiences the delight of being able to pronounce some of the sounds and recognize the ideas to which they correspond (75). This trajectory, besides representing the basic mimetic qualities of education, is even theatrical in its progression; from observing the positions and interactions of his models, to

beginning to learn their language, he eventually longs “to discover the motives and feelings of these lovely creatures” (85). This movement towards a knowledge of interiority mirrors that of an actor preparing for a role, since his longing is linked not to a general concern, but to a desire to replicate their existences from the inside out in an effort to become his distinct self, a theatrical impulse made explicit in the monster’s expression of his desire “to become an actor in the busy scene” (85).

The monster is also linked to his deficient father figure through specific textual echoes, reiterate phrases and moments which have a distinct importance in the novel, like those of the Shakespearean mimetic children discussed in Chapter 1. In adopting the bird imagery his mother employs when expressing her adult anxiety, young Macduff asserts his mimetic presence by traversing the boundaries between the adult and child spheres to establish a dominant motif of the play. As he interacts with his nursemaids in *The Winter’s Tale*, Mamillius echoes and adapts both his father’s language, in commenting on women’s brows, and the adult anxiety about the honesty of women; his reiteration of these large-scale thematics through playful manipulation and assertion of independence establishes his importance as a mimetic child, and suggests the opportunities for literary effectiveness presented by representations of parent-child relations. These children, and Frankenstein’s monster, are essentially literary embodiments of Corsaro’s comments that, through play, children mimic and embellish adult models, and in doing so, contribute to cultural production in ways that are about power and control. In the case of mimetic children (or child figures, like the monster) in literary works this power is about contributing to the culture of the play or novel, not about the character himself having control over situations; young Macduff proves to be as tragically breakable as the egg used to refer to him, but the

reader's recognition of the important images, themes, and ideas is enhanced considerably by his brief but potent presence.

These kinds of textual echoes, in the case of Victor Frankenstein and his monstrous offspring, also serve to establish a genealogical connection between father and son and suggest their mimetic and performative literary relation. Similarly paired expressions link the two in their moments of despair. Provoked by his rejection by his "beloved cottagers" the monster wonders, "Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed?" (91). Later, as he recalls the discovery of Elizabeth's death, the "destruction of the best hope," Victor exclaims, "[g]reat god! why did I not then expire!" (135). In both cases, the orators theatrically express the novel's ongoing tension between living and not living, creation and destruction; faced with the obliteration of each of their best hopes, in the form of a hideously mangled tableau (the misunderstood monster clinging to his foraged father, the lifeless body of Elizabeth "thrown across the bed") (135). Finally, as Levine points out, Walton is deterred from his inherited task of destroying the monster, instead listening and (as Victor might say) "compassionat[ing]" (99) because the monster "speaks in a way that echoes Frankenstein's own ideas and sentiments" (Levine 19). These textual reverberations are evidence of the kind of character doubling intrinsic to the novel, but also emphasize the inherently mimetic father-son relation. Besides their theatricality and these direct textual echoes, the creature and his parent are also linked through the mimetic quality of the monster's malformed creative impulses. Upon encountering William, the creature's initial hope is to "seize him, and educate him as [his] companion and friend"; when this fails, and results in the boy's death, the creature proclaims triumphantly, "I too can create desolation" (96-7). In a grotesque

manipulation of his creator's inclinations, the creature sees in his murder of the child an ultimately productive act.

The combination of mimetic performance and grotesquerie finds its clearest expression in Shelley's recurring use of tableaux as a subset of the novel's theatricality. Scenes depicting both Victor, and the monster—and frequently both together—take textual forms which are recognizably reminiscent of the melodramatic feature. In fact, most of Victor's encounters with his creation appear as a distinct tableau, striking in its theatricality and the consistency of its repetition. Just before his first escape from the initial horror of his own creation, he views “the wretch...by the dim and yellow light of the moon, as it forced its way through the window-shutters....he held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out” (35). This is the debut performance of Victor's great creation; dramaturgically, the lighting source, defined stage space including curtain, and actor deportment are addressed. That the creature's acting is as yet inept—a very rough mimetic approximation of human behavior, including the movements towards speech, expression, and gesture—suggests both his imitative urges and Victor's failure to offer productive guidance in response to them. Victor perceives the outstretched hand as attempting to detain him; he casts the impulse menacingly and as a sort of set piece, when the movement of a newborn toward its parent in search of sustenance and protection is in fact yet another primitive juvenile urge. The next of these repeated tableaux occurs as Victor sits reflecting upon the task assigned him by the monster of creating a mate for him; looking up, he sees “by the light of the moon, the daemon at the casement” wrinkling his lips is a “ghastly grin” (115). Finally, as Victor raises his head from the murdered Elizabeth “in an agony of despair,” he

feels “a kind of panic on seeing the pale yellow light of the moon illuminate the chamber. The shutters had been thrown back; and with a sensation of horror not to be described, [he sees] at the open window a face most hideous and abhorred,” again with a grin upon it (136). The recurrence of these scenes, theatrical in their various elements, including the presence of the window as frame/proscenium in each, links the distinct moments of the initial creation, the prospect of creating a mate for the monster, and the destruction of Victor’s own mate, and thereby relies upon the novel’s intersections of theatricality, parents and children, and mimetic impulses to emphasize the inescapability of Victor’s situation, and also his continued perception of situations as static, in contrast with the monster’s understanding of himself, his parental relations, and the narrative trajectory, which are ever-evolving.

These recurring tableaux, so dependent upon gesture and heightened emotion, are not only theatrical, but are specifically evocative of the melodramatic mode whose popularity peaked in the nineteenth century. Tableaux in melodrama, according to Carolyn Williams, serve a punctuative function, marking narrative structure and also guiding shifts in audience response. Tableaux operate on the level of acting bodies, and also that of dramatic action, “interrupt[ing] and segment[ing] the drama into readable passages,” “arrest[ing] the action, then dissolv[ing] into action again, then freez[ing] into the next pose” (Williams 194). Melodramatic narrative is “suspended on these pictures, strung out like a wire between these points of condensed visual significance” (208). This notion of a narrative punctuated by condensed visual moments is observable in *Frankenstein* and offers yet another example of the mimetic textual linking of Victor with the monster, and they both employ the tableau—in Victor’s case, obsessively static, like a recurring nightmare, and in the creature’s, continually unsuccessful and evolving from misunderstanding to bitter fulfillment of audience expectation.

Rather than being a stable dramatic fixture as he is for Victor, the monster fails repeatedly to fulfill his own envisioned role in the stage image. At the moment of his revelation to the father of his revered cottager family, he seizes his hand, begging for understanding; “at that instant,” (of course, since instantaneity is essential to the “en media res” quality of the tableau) the other observers—Felix, his fellow student Safie, and his much affected Agatha—enter, and he asks, in a moment of pathetic narrative paralysis which echoes that of his father at the moment of his own birth, “who can describe their horror and consternation on beholding [him]?” (91). He clings humiliatingly to the father’s knees as Felix tears him away and strikes him, violently, tragically, “with a stick” (91). The monster becomes part of another failed tableau when he saves the young girl from drowning and drags her to shore. What ought to be a classic romantic scene of salvation is destroyed by his physical malformation and the approach of a rustic who, on seeing him in the process of “endeavor[ing], by every means in [his] power, to restore animation” (just like dad) to the girl, not only tears her away, but also proceeds to draw a gun and fire at the monster (95). The monster is persistently imaginative in his mental formation of dramatic scenes, but he is unable to escape the role of his physicality in the perceiver’s engagement.

In fact, his repeated failures evolve to the point where the tableaux in which he is featured become just the kind of the horrific scenes the earlier ones were misinterpreted to be. Urged by the impulse to befriend William, and in a clumsy attempt at reenactment of the kinds of meaningful physical interactions he observed in his cottagers—the old man raising the girl from where she knelt at his feet, or leaning on the arm of the young man, the creature “seized on the boy as he passed and drew him towards [himself]” (evoking both desperation and spastic pathological physical unwieldiness, the creature’s efforts at human contact are described

repeatedly as “seizures”); when the boy responds by “plac[ing] his hands before his eyes and utter[ing] a shrill scream,” the monster describes himself as drawing the boy’s hand “forcibly from his face,” saying, “Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me” (96). This moment is of particular importance in the monster’s mimetic development, since it is the first in which he attempts to clarify the mistaken meaning of the scene, to reason with his fellow actor; just by doing this, though, he has in a way cemented his failure, since the tableau is defined by the wordlessness of its communication. Since it is William himself, rather than any external spectator, who misinterprets the monster’s stage picture, the internal dysfunction is inescapable; realizing this, as he realizes too the child’s status as a miniature double of his detested creator, he restages the scene, finally succumbing to the repeated pressure of audience expectation and leaving William silent—as a tableau participant ought to be—and dead at the creature’s feet.

Thus these moments of “condensed visual significance” and the intricate network of echoes they inhabit illustrates the novelistic application of the tableau’s punctuative and directive physicality. The important consanguinity of these two “titanic bourgeois genres”—the melodrama and the novel, both “dedicated to a similar set of social and representational problems”—does not go unacknowledged by Williams. Not only do they develop in tandem, both explore the question of “whether outer, visible appearance can be interpreted correctly to reveal inner, psychological or ethical truth” (217). The most profound comparison, though, according to Williams, are the technologies employed in both novel and melodrama to shift “between differing registers of representation or points of view, especially...between internal and external perspectives” (218). Both of these articulations are essential to the function not only of tableaux, but of theatricality

more broadly in *Frankenstein*, and are also linkable to the performative concerns which define the figure of the mimetic child.

That *Frankenstein* has also been an extremely popular subject for stage adaptation also speaks to Williams' suggestion of a symbolic relation between the novel and the melodrama, as well as to the particular tendencies of Shelley's novel towards the melodramatic. Steven Earl Forry offers a historical introduction to various renderings of the novel, highlighting the success of Richard Brinsley Peake's 1823 work *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* as responsible for renewed interest in the novel, inspiration of fourteen other dramatizations, and the establishment of the public perception of the Frankenstein myth as it stands today. Emma Raub also argues for the lasting effect of Peake's adaptation, but in specific terms of the dramatic transformation of the monster from his role as eloquent self-educated narrator, to the stock melodramatic character of the mute. Through the "seemingly contradictory techniques of grotesque costume and ingenuous gesture," Peake, and T.P. Cooke, the actor who developed the role of the monster (listed in the playbill as an underscored blank: "_____", a manipulation of theatrical convention which reifies the problematics of the creature's identity), present a monster who manages "at once to horrify *and* to portray goodness, gentleness, affection, and kindness" (438). Raub offers a fascinating engagement with modern critics who, she argues, misread the adaptive deverbalizing of the creature because they fail to recognize this melodramatic convention of the mute, and the fact that the monster's absent speech is replaced by "alternate forms of language" (442). This is the language of the tableau which, in its very silence provides the narrative with both punctuation and a mimetic propulsive energy.

The kind of narrative curtain play which produces tableaux is also present in the prevalence in the novel of framing as a motif—the recurring imposition of the proscenium. The

motif of framing is of particular importance in the case of Shelley and her novel because it brings theatricality together with perspective and domesticity; a frame calls very focused attention to that which is inside of it, and therefore, implicitly, to that which is *outside* or unable to fit within it.⁵⁷ Returning to his father's house after the death of William, he "gazes at a picture of [his] mother" hanging over the mantelpiece, beneath which is a miniature of William; this miniature must remind the reader of the one which factors so prominently in the saga of William's death (49). The miniature of Madame Frankenstein which William wears is curiously significant, both thematically and narratively. At the moment at which the monster is poised to destroy the child, he notices "glittering on his breast" the "portrait of a lovely woman"; initially softened and attracted, his rage returns as he remembers his own deprivation of "the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow" (97). The momentary benevolence followed by immediate violence (as he realizes that the sight of him would have changed her benign divinity to frightened disgust) suggest the importance of the framed image, and its instrumentality in the narrative moment, particularly since the relation of his reaction to the miniature takes the place of any explicit commentary on the actual murder.

Things Great and Small: Size, Perspective, and Childhood in *Frankenstein* and Beyond

The importance ascribed to the miniature portrait in this scene depends upon an unusually complex convergence of familial relations, domesticity, irregular size, theatrical framing, and

⁵⁷ In his 1967 essay "What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn into Little Squares All the Same Size and Shot Down the Toilet," Jean Genet reflects on the nature of the frame, commenting, "when I see only the bust or head of people, . . . I can't help imagining them standing in manure." *Fragments of the Artwork*. Charlotte Mandell, trans. Werner Hamacher, ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. Print.)

control of perspective. In this synthesis of ideas, and their contribution to the novel's narrative development, is a direct connection to notions of childhood, and to the figure of the performative child. Like children (who are miniature adults), objects of irregular size are inevitably considered in relation to their "normal" models, which demands an awareness of perspective, a concept upon which narrative is dependent; power is derived from this irregularity. Children are also placed in a state of perpetual Otherness by their status as miniature adults. Representations of size, otherness, mimesis, doubling, and perspective, particularly as relate to children, are found in and help to define the works of various nineteenth-century authors, including those where the children are actual children rather than monsters, and assume nonetheless monstrous performativity.

The gigantism of Frankenstein's monster is the source of his ongoing identity crises, as they are generally connected to his physical self-perception; seeing his reflection in a transparent pool (the anti-Narcissus), the monster is "terrified," since after admiring the "grace, beauty, and delicate complexions" of his cottagers, he has likely formed an empathetic self-image, only to be shocked and disappointed by the reality (76). Besides lamenting his failure to align physically with his admired models, though, the monster explicitly connects his isolation and abandonment not with monstrosity, but with a lack of natural development in terms of size. He wonders, "where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses; or if they had, all my past life was now a blot, a blind vacancy in which I distinguished nothing. From my earliest remembrance I had been as I was then in height and proportion" (81). Where he is inclined to find years of fond memories of the process by which he came to be his "adult" self, there is only a "blind vacancy," a void which he expresses immediately in terms of his abnormal physical development, specifically proportion.

The creature's lack of childhood becomes a literalization of the Romantic idealization of childhood as a distinct realm of limited accessibility, a privileging often mediated by the changeable processes of memory, as in *the Prelude* when Wordsworth opines of his childhood self, "[w]ould that I could now / Recall what then I pictured to myself" (VII.106-107).

But it also calls attention to the pitiable fact of the creature's physicality; even Victor's own struggles with problems of perspective in the effort "to create a figure both life-size and life-like (and even living) in his own image leads inevitably to a disintegrating other and disintegrated self" (Carriker 30), and this disintegration is only more pronounced for the poor creature, who is essentially a giant miniature adult. Just as the absence of parental modeling leads to his unfocused and patchworked self-identification (discussed above), the undeniability of his body and his inability to trace in his own history a logical progression of size in relation to maturation and developing capability disorient his sense of self and belonging and further hinder the potency of his natural inclination towards mimesis and play. This oppression depends upon ideas of otherness as related to size, scale, and perspective—a neatly fraught concept which provides an important link between the bodies of characters (and their creations), and narrative—all of which are implicit in representations of childhood.

The multi-layered notion of perspective appears in Anne Mellor's essay on the female in *Frankenstein* in relation to the text's connection between the ethical and the aesthetic through attention to the maintenance of appropriate size relations. Walton, the story's initial narrative agent, comments that his day dreams "want (as the painters call it) *keeping*," meaning that they lack the proper distance between near and distant objects in a picture; Frankenstein, Mellor writes, "should have better balanced the obligations of great and small, of parent and child, of creator and creature"; his failure to do so is "both a moral and aesthetic failure, resulting directly

in the creation of a hideous monster” (230). This failure on the parts of both narrators to maintain proper proportions represents for Mellor a violation of Shelley’s norm, both ethical *and* aesthetic, “of keeping balance between large and small objects (286). Using the idea of perspective, Mellor creates a fluidity between the kinds of irregular size relations studied by Kitti Carriker in her work with dolls, miniatures, and doubling in nineteenth-century novels, and the more conceptual ideas of large and small applicable to moral and narrative questions. This interest in size—particularly in cases of characters who might be described as mimetic children—recurs in other 19th century novels, combining mimesis and monstrosity in ways which help to define the narrative.

While Frankenstein’s monster is a sort of grotesque gigantic doll, other nineteenth-century novel characters identified by Carriker as dolls assume a twofold appeal in that they are both doubles and miniatures, exhibiting the uncanny by being “familiar yet unknown” (13). Carriker identifies in critical work on “the aesthetic of littleness and detail” (Susan Stewart, Naomi Schor, Hall and Ellis) arguments for the “latent power of the small and trivial” (Carriker 13). In miniatures Stewart recognizes not only power, but also an “essential *theatricality*”; it is the cooperation of size, power, and theatricality, that allow the arguments of Stewart, Carriker, and others like Kurnick to complicate the understanding of the mimetic child figure in nineteenth-century novels. Also, given the natural association of childhood with the domestic (though sometimes in opposition to the child of nature model), these arguments inevitably address questions of public and private, thereby incidentally (but not unrelatedly) echoing this chapter’s discussion of the distinction between the genre of the theater and the novel.

The gigantic Stewart sees as representative of “infinity, exteriority, the public, and the overly natural,” while “closure, interiority, the domestic, and the overly cultural,” are all

associated with the miniature (70). In his study of theatrical failure and the novel (discussed above in relation to Godwin), Kurnick also addresses miniaturization, in specific reference to Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and its representation of the domestic which he sees as "a space in which the public world of fairground theatricality is drawn indoors and shrunk to child-sized scale" (31). He highlights the novel's pervasive sense of miniaturization, manifested in various tonal and imagistic features, including the book's many images of children doing 'adult' things. Kurnick's argument assumes a fascinating complexity in his characterization of nineteenth-century childhood as a "historical palimpsest":

On the one hand, the child's game, as a miniature activity taking place in a domestic world itself understood as a miniature kingdom, is the very image of fortified privacy, the prototype of what Stewart calls the 'within within within' of the domestic miniature (61). Home, family, child, toy theater: a set of shrinking boxes figuring with increasing intensity both the pathos of diminishment and the alienation from a public culture. On the other hand, that spectacle's resemblance to the public world points, as if through the looking glass, back into a world of fairground sociability. Childhood is thus at once the centerpiece of domestic felicity and the note of discord at its heart—a conjunction that explains why children are the site of such ambivalent overinvestment in *Vanity Fair*. (41)

The ambivalence Kurnick recognizes here, as well as the sense of containment, and the echo of Stewart's identification of the essential theatricality of the miniature reiterate the convergence of interiority, mimesis, performance, and childhood, recalling that discussed above in the context of the framing (of the miniature portrait, as well as the tableau, which achieves a sort of miniaturizing through stasis), as well as in the linking of Godwin and Shelley through Baillie's child-centered theories on the performance of passion.

Stewart's intriguing chapter on the Miniature includes sections on Micrographia, tableaux, and the "Secret Life of Things," among other topics. In this last category, Stewart expands what she calls "the daydream of the microscope"—the idea that "the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life—indeed, to reveal a set of actions and hence a narrativity and history outside the given field of perception" (54). In a note, she reminds her reader of the Brontës' inclination toward the miniature, their creation of tiny books with tiny printing seemingly connected, via the microscope, to "the daydream of life inside life" associable with their imaginary kingdoms of Glass Town, Gondal, and Angria (Stewart 54). Here, as in the work of Satta and Corsaro, and later that of J.M. Barrie⁵⁸, there is an image of children creating on a miniature, or at least a separate and contained, scale, imaginative worlds which are in distinct relation—whether mimetic or deliberately *unmimetic*—to the adult world, and whose access is regulated by children and their capabilities. Christine Alexander, editor of a 2010 edition of the Brontë's juvenilia, characterizes their work with imaginary kingdoms as literal and imaginative colonization in that their writing "imitat[ed] and reconfigur[ed] the political and social world of nineteenth-century England that they encountered in their extensive reading" (xvi), a reactionary tendency which recalls Corsaro's observation of the tendency of children at play to "elaborate and embellish adult models to address their own concerns" (Satta 5). To Stewart's initial consideration of size and scale, then, are added the elements of interiority, privileged access, and juvenile mimetic creative powers. And always accompanying such imagined spaces is the essential theatricality ascribed to the miniature and to the child (as miniature adult developing through mimetic processes). In an especially useful moment for this argument, Stewart

⁵⁸ In a striking echo of Barrie's articulation of the Never Land as "always more or less an island" on the "map of a person's mind" (73), Nina Auerbach calls Gondal "the secret room in Emily Brontë's imagination" ("Changeful" 49).

exemplifies the “experience of profound loneliness” which can accompany the viewing of miniatures by invoking the image of “Frankenstein outside the peasant hut” (71). Assuming Stewart means to refer to Frankenstein’s monster, the tableau she selects is ideal in its synthesis of spectatorship, miniaturized domesticity, frustrated accessibility, and theatricalized interiority.

Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*, while not dependent on miniaturization to the extent that *Vanity Fair* is shown to be (though the diminutive title has that same sort of dollhousing effect, which in conjunction with its familiar foreignness perhaps recalls the spatial containment of the Brontë’s imaginary kingdoms), is certainly a novel concerned—or obsessed, according to Litvak—with the theater and theatricality, as well as with childhood and perspective. Besides its many scenes of theater attendance and performance, the novel consistently employs theatrical language and imagery, from the “encoding” of the action “as a series of ‘scenes’ and ‘spectacles,’” to the “stock company [of] allegorical players” who populate and define the narrative; even this narrative itself, Litvak argues, might be called theatrical, given Lucy Snowe’s “repertoire of evasive and duplicitous tactics in telling—and not telling—her story” (82).

Litvak also emphasizes the ambiguous overlapping of the thematics of acting and spectatorship with those of teaching; while the narrative “keeps positing an opposition between the “disciplinary activity of the governess/teacher” and the “flamboyant career of the actress,” it is also continually undermining that opposition, so that “Lucy is at once the self-effacing antithesis and the unlikely double” of characters like Vashti and Ginevra. The novel’s “primary spatial foci”—the schoolroom and the theater—are conflated so that each each becomes a scene of instruction (I would argue for the addition of a domestic space to this list).

Villette also portrays a child figure whose quiet monstrosity, while certainly not the same as that of the Frankenstein's creature, shares with him important mimetic tendencies and narrative importance. Lucy Snowe has barely begun to establish her narrative authority and the smooth flow of time, peacefully free of variety or incident, she enjoyed as a guest at her godmother's home, when the scene of domestic stability she is working to establish is disrupted by the imminent arrival of the child Polly. Curiously, Lucy's first indication of a change in circumstances is in her bedroom, where she returns from a long walk to find "in addition to [her own] French bed in its shady recess...a small crib, draped with white; and in addition to [her] mahogany chest of drawers,...a tiny rosewood chest" (2). Like a character in a Greek tragedy Lucy wonders, "Of what are these things signs and tokens?...The answer was obvious. 'A second guest is coming...'" (2). Obvious though the answer may prove to be, given that Lucy is the narrator, the ominous quality of her question necessarily heightens the importance of the decorative developments, the specific character of which is an important precursor to Polly's arrival, representation, and role in the novel. Michael Klotz asks why nineteenth-century novels place "such emphasis on the furnishings of rooms," (10) and turns to Thad Logan's analysis of the Victorian drawing room as both a cultural artifact "delimiting the horizons of character" and a "subject of mimetic representation" (qtd in Klotz 11). Using Logan as well as Susan Stewart, Klotz argues that the arrangement of objects in domestic spaces in nineteenth century novels allows characters to construct and display their interiority; the particular texts he considers are *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* and he points out the tension in both novels between "the arrangement of interior spaces and the vicissitudes of the characters that inhabit them" (11).

Naturally, Klotz also notes the disruption of the peaceful domestic scene in the Bretton house with Polly's arrival being first indicated by the new and strange furniture in Lucy's

previously private space. He states that since the narrative is retrospective, Lucy's "subsequent jealousy of Paulina influences the presentation of her arrival," and argues that the furniture "crowds [her] bedroom and occludes her view of Graham," leading her to infer that the alterations have some larger significance, beyond the simple arrival of a guest (Klotz 20). It is a moment where Lucy's "consciousness is discernible in her description of the objects that surround her" (Klotz 21). All this is accurate (though the occlusion of her view of Graham does not seem textually indicated here, especially given Lucy's inclinations toward privacy and the containment of the bedroom as a domestic space), but the scope and direction of Klotz's argument does not allow for extensive attention to this moment, nor for the important recognition of the levels of mimetic tension at work in this moment. It is not only that the sanctity of Lucy's most private space has been compromised, nor only that the domestic trappings offer an outward (and in this case, premonitory) view of Lucy's consciousness that is perhaps more honest and reliable than Lucy's own accounts; it is that this violation takes the form of an act of doubling, and one in which the duplicate objects are mutated in ways which highlight Lucy's own anxieties and which will continue to be reflected in the relations between she and Polly throughout the novel. Lucy's self-portrayal is, like her furniture, basic and solid, its country of origin its only defining characteristic; Polly's furniture, of course, is tiny, draped in white, and made of rosewood—all elegant, feminine, and diminutive.⁵⁹

That Lucy responds to this doubling as if it were indeed a supernatural, rather than a mundanely domestic, occurrence supports the reading of material environments as externalized

⁵⁹ It also seems at least worth noting, in a text so concerned with theatricality (and narrative) as "system[s] of artifice and deception," (Litvak 82) that one of the replicated objects is a bed; while Lucy's own solid French bed is already, according to Plato, "thrice removed," through mimetic processes, from truth; Polly's bed, being an imitation of Lucy's—and a particularly performative imitation—is removed yet again.

interiority, but it also prepares the reader for Lucy's representation of Polly herself upon her arrival. Following the portentous refurnishing, Paulina makes her arrival not as the "little girl" Lucy has prepared herself to expect, but as "a shawled bundle in [the coachman's] arms" (4) (not unlike her very distant cousin Heathcliff, discussed below). Apparently caught off guard by this apparition, Lucy asks "[i]s that the child?" (4). Despite the confirmation, she continues to present the little intruder as an oddity, with particular attention to her physicality and speech. The "shawled bundle" next becomes a disembodied "small voice," asking, for the first of many times, to be put down. "The speaker" is seen removing the pin of the shawl with "its minute hand," and Lucy goes on to describe the actions of "the creature which now appeared" in its futile attempt to fold the shawl, whose drapery proved "much too heavy and large to be sustained or wielded by those hands and arms" (4). Thus unwrapped, "the neat, completely-fashioned little figure, light, slight, and straight" continues to defy conventional juvenile representation; she is "a mere doll," a "small stranger," a "particular little body" (4, 7). Besides being generally odd, though—a broad response which might be attributed simply to Lucy's discomfort with the domestic disruption—Polly proceeds to be characterized in several very specific ways, all of which are unsettling in their evocation of miniaturized domestic monstrosity, grounded in mimesis. The first is that she is a tiny child who is described as "most unchildlike" (6); when finally pushed to use "child" rather than "creature," "pygmy," or "it," Lucy strenuously qualifies her own choice of vocabulary, calling it an "inappropriate and undescriptive term—a term suggesting any picture rather than that of the demure little person in a mourning frock and chemisette...silent, diligent, absorbed, womanly" (12). In this "disquieting adulthood," which depends upon juvenile otherness and perspective, and helps to dictate narrative framing Polly recalls the "disconcertingly solemn and prematurely adult" child figures identified by Marjorie Garber as

populating the plays of Shakespeare and directing their dramatic development with their mimetic agency as literary figures.

The second point of significance in Polly's early role in the text is the evident theatricality of her assimilation into the household and her interaction with its inmates, Graham in particular. If Paulina's furniture occludes Lucy's view of Graham, Polly's superior performative abilities result in the jolting recasting of Lucy into the role of understudy in her own narrative. Thus introduced, she will continue to be both defined and threatened by the performances of others in ways that create the dynamic narrative hers is known to be. Following the child (or creature) Polly's arrival, Graham is described as coming "on the stage" (12); immediately, he invites her into socially parodic role playing, noting "a young lady in the present society to whom [he has] not been introduced" (13). He proceeds to address her directly: "Miss Home...might I have the honour to introduce myself, since no one else seems willing to render you and me that service? Your slave, John Graham Bretton" (13). Though this is of course mischievous though in no way malicious teasing on the part of Graham, it nonetheless defines the nature of their interaction as theatrical—particularly since Graham (as Dr. John) will eventually authenticate the role he playfully initiates. Lucy continues to reflect somewhat sourly on the "scenes pretty sure to be enacted between [Graham] and Miss Paulina" (16), and recounts Polly's adoption of certain names for Graham "in imitation of his mother" (21).

There is a curious narrative shift when adulthood is no longer a performance for Polly; she retains her otherworldly quality, appearing to Lucy (again, in her own room), as "something dressing itself—an airy, fairy thing—small, slight, white—a winter spirit," reminding her momentarily of "Graham and his spectral illusions" (290), but from here on out, when Polly has become the Countess de Bassompierre to Graham's Dr. John (and unsurprisingly, Lucy's Lucy),

Lucy presents Polly as strategically performing childhood. “[A]ll the child left her,” Lucy reports, when Polly’s father and Mrs. Bretton leave the room; “with us, more nearly her companions in age, she rose at once to the little lady: her very face seemed to alter; that play of feature, and candour of look, which, when she spoke to her father, made it quite dimpled and round, yielded to an aspect more thoughtful, and lines distincter and less *mobile*” (304). This representation reinforces the ethereality of childhood in creating in Polly a juvenile alter ego who wanders out of her body and the room in the tracks of her father, leaving her to adjust the trappings of performances to her current situation. She is a physical embodiment of the division between childhood and adulthood, and her ease of movement between them is couched in performative terms. When her father speaks of what might happen once his daughter is a woman, though she would “sometimes smile and take his honoured head between her little hands, and kiss his iron-grey locks; and at other times, she would pout and toss her curls...she never said, ‘Papa, I *am* grown up’ “ (317). For Lucy, whose own narration is of questionable reliability, Polly’s performance of her father’s designated role—much as she “rose...to the little lady” in response to Graham’s initial interactions with her as an actual child—coupled with her lack of clear articulation of the truth, is evidence that it is Polly’s mimetic facility which allows her to assume both narrative significance and an essential role in the Bretton family, a sphere which Lucy is never able to penetrate successfully.

Polly’s performance here also admits her into a class of mimetic child characters, including Heathcliff and *Frankenstein’s* (not monstrous) Elizabeth, distinguished by their imitative infiltration of domestic scenes and subsequent assumed status as members of families.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ This is one instance in which a mention of mimesis’ evolutionary biological applications seems pertinent; natural mimesis occurs when an organism protects itself by evolving to share characteristics with or tendencies of its model.

These mimetic siblings and offspring appear occasionally throughout nineteenth-century novels, where the enhanced focus on interior domestic situations heightens the literary potential of any unconventional family dynamic. They arrive suddenly and unexpectedly, unsettling extant family relations, assume their roles through imitation, and generate power—both as characters and as literary figures—from their points of divergence and from their eventual centrality, which they often assume, oddly, through romantic or marital connections. This is the quality of the mimetic child characterized by the analogy to the da capo aria, and expressed in Homi Bhabha’s concise phrase, “almost the same but not quite.” Also seemingly relevant here is Carol Chillington Rutter’s characterization of Shakespearean children (quoted in Chapter Two) as “[s]imultaneously the embodiment of the future the adult plans but knows he will not live to see and the nostalgic recollection of the adult’s innocent past, . . . stubbornly material, getting in the adult’s way. But they are also ghosts, hauntings” (xiv). *Wuthering Heights*, no stranger to ghostly presences, offers a particularly complex manifestation of this convergence of ideas in the figure of Heathcliff, who is at once an embodied nightmare future and a haunting nostalgic memory; this duality is enabled by the mystery and mimetic adaptive processes which characterize his arrival and eventual assimilation into the family.

Heathcliff, for example, is first introduced to the Earnshaw family—though the reader, and the narrator Mr. Lockwood have, of course, already made his acquaintance—as a bundle which Mr. Earnshaw, arriving home late from a three day journey to be greeted eagerly by his children who are expecting presents, takes from his great-coat, telling his wife she must take what he offers, “e’en take it as a gift of God; though it’s as dark almost as if it came from the devil’ (Brontë 29). The housekeeper Nelly Dean recalls her first view of the “dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than

Catherine's; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand" (29). More monstrous even than Lucy's characterization of Polly, the representation of the child Heathcliff relies upon the darkest version of the "child of nature" paradigm, the "noxious or savage" (or both) child, identified by James Kincaid as one of many "widespread contradictory images" in opposition to the innocent child, an image that was not in fact "all that common in the nineteenth century," according to Kincaid (73). "If the child of nature is figured not as an emptiness but one more in touch with primal sympathies," Kincaid writes, "we have a creation more complex and threatening" (74). He is referring at least in part to the apparently contrasting idea of the child as loving, but the images of primal savagery and threatening complexity, as well as the unsettling impenetrability of Heathcliff's language (a foreign presence, as opposed to a placid tractable void, like Crusoe's depiction of Friday as a slow but willing neophyte of the English language), recall Caliban's "gabbl[ing] like a thing most brutish" (I.ii.359-361). Unlike Caliban, though, Heathcliff secures his position at (and eventual role as master of) *Wuthering Heights*, by becoming Cathy's double, as her famous assertion "*I am Heathcliff*" attests.

Elizabeth—another relocated nineteenth-century orphan—is sent to live with her uncle and his family, her father writes, "it is my wish...that you should consider her as your own daughter," and she is absorbed smoothly into the family sphere. Even Justine, the servant girl close to the Frankenstein family and ultimately put to death for the monster's murder of William, is described in a curious mimetic relation to Victor's mother, as Elizabeth writes in a letter to Victor: "[Justine] thought [Madame Frankenstein] the model of all excellence, and endeavored to imitate her phraseology and manners, so that even now she often reminds me of her" (40). Given that Victor's family is populated mimetically, rather than naturally, with a series of imitation

daughters, his consuming impulse to create life through patchwork replication becomes less shocking, and the monster's own eventual hope for a similarly derived familial circle can be seen as a logical progression of his upbringing.

These extensions of the arguments which begin in *Frankenstein* assume various independent significances, but all are dependent upon the convergence in the child figure of theatricality and narrative power. Just as Shakespearean mimetic children were shown in Chapter One to be thematically integral to their works, these novelized child figures capitalize on their own otherness, often through size and consequently questions of perspective, to achieve through their mimetic processes an importance which exceeds their immediately evident value. That a path can be traced from Frankenstein's abandoned offspring through Polly, Heathcliff, Elizabeth, and finally, in the analysis which follows, the troupe of performing children in *Dracula*, suggests a continuity throughout the century in representations of children as reclaiming narrative agency through performance, with their potential vulnerability often assisting in this process.

In the nineteenth century's other great novel of monstrosity—Bram Stoker's *Dracula*—there is a curious scene which sustains and complicates the period's representation of the fearsome performative powers of children, proving especially revealing given Stoker's own personal interest and involvement in the theater, the contemporary social and historical developments related to the stage (and to children's place on it), and the experimental form of the novel. Children appear only rarely in *Dracula* (though arguments have been made about *Dracula*

himself as a “monster baby,” due to his persistent and violent oral fixation⁶¹). They are primarily victims who emphasize the savage corruption of the maternity of vampire women, and eventually come to symbolize the restoration of domestic order in the birth of the child of Jonathan and Mina (now properly mothering, rather than writing), who is the product of the communal efforts of the group as a whole, solidified in the naming of the boy Quincey, after the one dead member. But after the alluring Lucy Westenra has been transformed into a vampiress wandering Hampstead Heath in search of juvenile blood, there is a series of reports which describe her actions, and the subsequent reactions of the local children. The novel’s Westminster Gazette reports that after the beautiful and mysterious woman has begun her recurring practice of enticing children to come away with her, reenacting these predatory abductions becomes “the favourite game of the little ones” (Stoker 189). The “tiny tots” pretend to be the “bloofer lady” and take turns “luring each other away by wiles”; a correspondent to the newspaper writes that caricaturists might “take a lesson in the irony of grotesque by comparing the reality and the picture” (189). The article continues:

It is only in accordance with general principles of human nature that the ‘bloofer lady’ should be the popular role at these *al fresco* performances. Our correspondent naively says that even Ellen Terry could not be so winningly attractive as some of these grubby-faced little children pretend – and even imagine themselves – to be. (189)

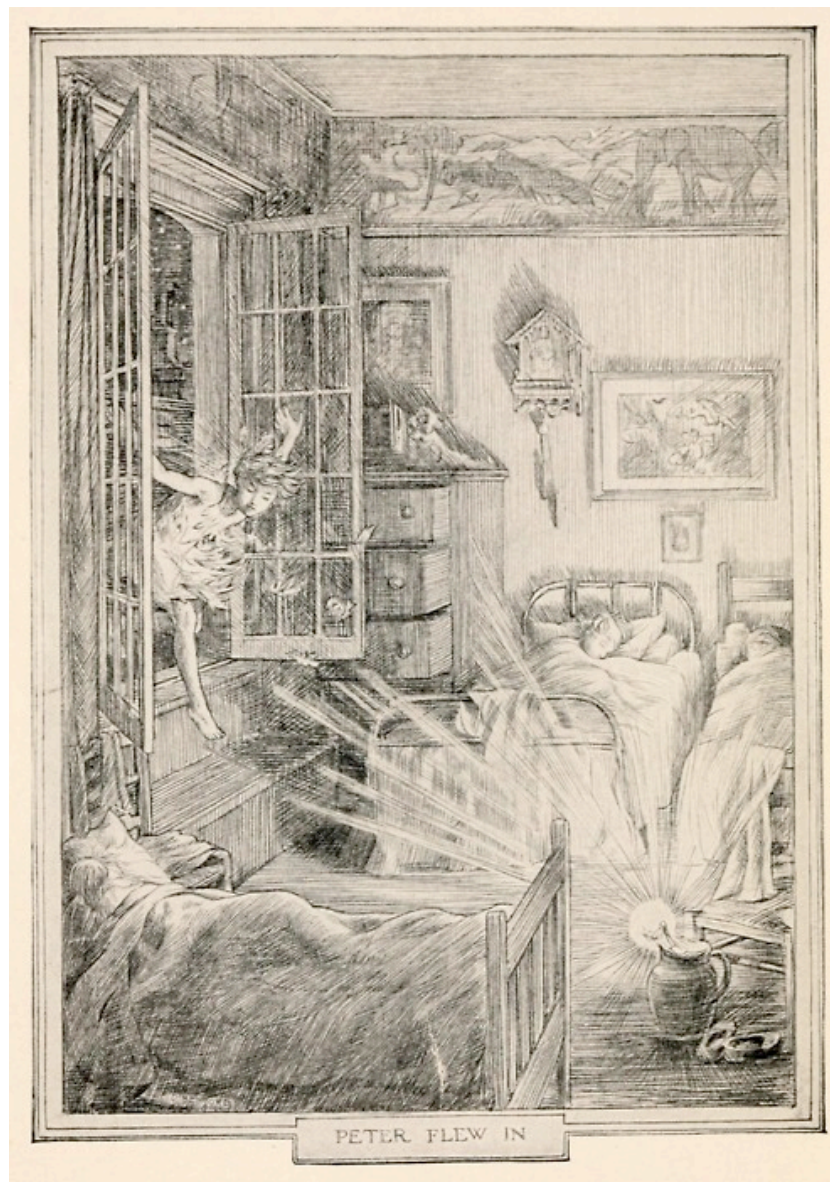
Secondary to the novel’s main action and representing children, whose appearances are otherwise infrequent, this depiction of mimetic children observing and imaginatively processing the terrible threat with gleeful self-satisfaction into play and performance, echoes Joanna Baillie’s

⁶¹ See Barbara Almond, “Monstrous Infants and Vampiric Mothers in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.” *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. 88 (2007) 219-35.

sentiments. Though the children's performances are said by the correspondent to be "supremely funny," he is recognized as naïve, while the mimetic children become grotesque; it is also reported that for a week after there had been a wolf loose in the area, "the children were playing nothing but Red Riding Hood on the Heath and in every alley in the place until this 'bloofer lady' scare came along, since when it has been quite a gala-time with them"; the versatility with which the children assume the performative identity of that which threatens their community, the geographic pervasiveness of their play, as well as the saturnalian yet urbane chaos somehow implied by "gala-time" represents the children as assuming, through their mimetic play, some of the threatening monstrosity and social disruption of the vampire who is so delighting them (208). Their play is also dangerously insular; the translation of a real menace into an imaginative performance to which adults have access only as naïve audience members is a singularly juvenile act which reinforces the unsettling power of the mimetic child. There is also an indication in this scene of the kind of cruelty which Baillie indicates as a presence in children's games, particularly as they are used to process threats from the adult world (in this case, a perverted maternal figure who takes rather than giving life through oral exchange of fluids). The "infantile ruthlessness" which Almond identifies in *Dracula* is both a continuation of the trajectory of the mimetic child's performative power, and a precursor to the kind of cruelty J.M. Barrie will consider in the story of *Peter Pan* (the primary text of the next and final chapter) in which children are "gay and innocent and heartless" (226).

The image of Frankenstein as a "phantasmagoria of the nursery" (Moers 224) conjured by Shelley through the monstrous representation of mimetic relations between parents and children and the novel's pervasive theatricality neatly unites these dramatic concerns with questions of domesticity, while also evoking the ethereal qualities frequently evinced by

nineteenth-century mimetic child figures, and in doing so points directly to the next chapter, and the final step in the consideration of the progression of the mimetic child from Shakespeare to the Victorian stage. Waiting in the wings is the quintessential nursery phantasmagoria, complete with child performers, play of light and shadow, and that culturally indelible definitively framed and billowy-curtained window in the warm containment of the adult-controlled domestic space of the nursery, gaping open into the darkness of the juvenile performative imagination.



Chapter Four: The Infant Phenomenon: Victorian Performing Children and the Case of Peter Pan

[W]hen young persons first visit theatres, they are often bewildered, delighted, carried away, think it the most delightful life imaginable, all brightness and pleasure, to be somewhat envied; oh, so nice to be an actor, or more often, and actress—dancer—anything—where everything looks so bright!...They go again and again, and gradually but surely come to the conclusion that it is not fairy land but very real, and they find that actors and actresses are only on the stage a few hours out of the twenty-four, and they have to live and to eat and drink, and are like ordinary mortals, and have to learn, and struggle, and strive, and that they have their worries and heartburnings, and sorrows and cares, and that the smiling face often covers an aching heart

-*The Stage of 1871*

...I have no recollection of writing the play of *Peter Pan*...you had played it until you tired of it, and tossed it in the air and gored it and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib.

-J.M. Barrie, "To The Five" (A dedication to *Peter Pan*)

Charles. Good God! Is there nothing real in life?

Mrs. Page. Heaps of things. Rosalind is real, and I am Rosalind; and the Forest of Arden is real, and I am going back to it; and cakes and ale are real, and I am to eat and drink them again.

-J.M. Barrie, *Rosalind*

The concept of the mimetic child depends upon the argument, presented in my introduction and supported by the association of the child figure with Shakespeare, that the ambivalence with which children are characterized, particularly throughout the nineteenth century, is parallel in its motivation by anxiety about imaginative, creative, and mimetic powers, to antitheatrical sentiments. There is even overlap in Plato's *Republic*, in which both the theater and the imaginative play of children are condemned for their problematic relations to truth. Historically, criticism of the theater, or what Jonas Barish has famously called antitheatricity, focuses on the inability of theatrical representation to offer a verisimilar image of Life, as well as on the potential corruption of both performers and consumers. Child's play is conceived of as both important for socialization and menacing, given the potential subversion of its imaginative innovation (Goldman 17), and young people are assessed by Socrates to be incapable of judging "what is allegorical and what is literal" (Plato 64). Placed in the context of the nineteenth-century

theater scene, these anxious claims return to the same questions of power and performance which surface in my initial discussion of the mimetic child and of performative Shakespearean children. To this matrix of children as characters, though, and children as readers, are added the figures of children at play (or at work) on the stage, to the enthrallment of audiences both juvenile and adult, and the socially regulated child (including child actors).

Few things are more evocatively (and unsettlingly) representative of the state of the mimetic child at the turn of the twentieth century—and the culmination of this argument—than the oddity of Peter Pan and the restless generic evolution of his story. Originated as a fantastical diversion in an adult novel, brought to life on the stage, excerpted into prose writing for children, novelized, and finally recorded in the form of a playscript of and for theatrical production, the story of Peter Pan has an extraordinary history of reconception. Because of this genealogy, its historical situation, and the emphasis in the narrative in all its versions on questions of children as performers, guided by their mimetic energy and in complex interconnectedness with adult-child relations, the Peter Pan narrative is an ideal text to bring the figure of the mimetic child into the twentieth century, and to bring the argument at hand to a close. To give this reading its appropriate weight, though, this chapter will first consider the transition of the mimetic child from literary figure to its incarnation as regulated body on the stage by looking at the conditions and conversations surrounding nineteenth-century child performers, including the hypothetical legislative subject, real-life sensations like William Henry West—Master Betty—, and satirical figures like Dickens' *Infant Phenomenon*. I also turn to sociological studies of actual children at play with the eventual goal of considering the child figures in and around the Peter Pan narrative as inescapably contained within the paradigm of thought about performance and mimesis which

encompasses Shakespearean children, mimetic child figures in nineteenth-century novels, and “real children” in their various forms.

Drama as a genre hinges upon a series of divisions, the most important of which are those between truth and representation, and between performer and spectator. Throughout its history the theater has frequently demonstrated a mischievous and productive awareness of the power of this barrier and the artistic potential of deliberately manipulating it, as the history of the concept of the “fourth wall” suggests. In another provocative parallel between children and theater, these boundaries between truth and performance, and between spectacle and spectator, are directly analogous to that which divides (or fails to divide) childhood from adulthood. This boundary between the child and the adult, and its various instabilities or transgressions, is a significant point of consideration for critics dealing with literature and theater for and about children in the nineteenth century.⁶²

Marah Gubar’s attempted reconception of the golden age of children’s literature takes issue with critics who promote an image of the period’s writers as subscribing to and propagating an “essentialized Romantic” division between adult and child which emphasized “naïve simplicity” and characterized children as members of a distinct and primitive race, protected by their detachment from civilization and their close association with nature (4). My earlier discussions of works by Wordsworth and the Lambs have shown that even for the Romantics this distinction was not simple at all, but these are certainly questions which appear in a work like *Peter Pan*, which stages the imaginative creation of worlds, presenting to an audience a mimetic

⁶² As well as earlier: David Shaughnessy describes the “boundaries between childhood and adulthood” in Shakespeare’s works as “both porous and ambiguous” (Chedgoy 7).

society of children at play in the detached natural space of the Never Land.⁶³ As further analysis will demonstrate, there is nothing simple or essentialized about the ways that either Peter Pan or the Darling children “act,” either in Bloomsbury or in the Never Land. Gubar reexamines the assumption that writers (like Lewis Carroll and J.M. Barrie) and other public figures who are considered members of the “cult of the child” were committed to the firm separation of child and adult; they were, rather, ambivalent toward conceptions of the child as innocent Other, and “*conflicted* about the issue of how to conceive of children,” resulting in their frequent assumption of nuanced positions which acknowledge the “pervasive and potentially coercive power of adult influence while nevertheless entertaining the possibility that children, while socially saturated, can nonetheless be enabled and inspired by their inevitable inheritance” (5). As my earlier discussions of the mimetic child have shown (and as this chapter’s consideration of the *Peter Pan* narrative will continue to address), the enabling and inspiration of these socially saturated children is not only due to this inheritance, but also to their natural abilities as skilled and innovative performers. It is for this reason that children are rarely simple victims; uneasy with the surprising power dynamics established by children’s performative abilities, various individuals, writers, and social institutions have sought to explain, regulate, and redirect this energy. Works like *Peter Pan*, whose historical situations coincide with the end of a century of heated debate on the role of the child in relation to parents, education, and performance, express in their foundational composition the tension of this energetic movement.

⁶³ In the first draft of the play, the island was called the Never, Never, Never Land, shortened in performance to the Never Never Land. The published playscript, though, records it as the Never Land. In *Peter and Wendy* it is the Neverland (Hollindale 311n24). “The Never Land” is used throughout this essay when referring to the general concept, and in the appropriate variation in citations or other version-specific references.

Like the plays and juvenile adaptations of Shakespeare, and nineteenth-century novels like *Frankenstein*, works which express this kind of dependency upon a conflicted conception of the child figure tend to extol “the child’s innocent simplicity while simultaneously indulging a profound fascination with youthful sharpness and precocity” (Gubar 9). This duality is frequently represented, throughout all these texts, in theatrical or performative terms. As seen in my chapter on mimetic monstrosity, as well as in the discussion of Stirling’s satire below, what is characterized here as precocity and sharpness often moves into more empowered and therefore more threatening realms, in which performative children are seen as possessing the “capacity to exploit and capitalize on the resources of adult culture (Gubar 5), and to assume positions of empowerment through performance. Sociologist Caterina Satta’s observations of children at play are recorded in my third chapter, but seem worth reiterating here, as she too sets up the space of children’s imaginative play as a “parallel dimension” linked with real life, where they are “capable of acting creatively, understanding each other, and creating an independent culture” (5, 1). This play-sphere, or “play-frame” as Satta usefully refers to it, is also defined by its inaccessibility to adults, and children’s play is presented by Satta and Corsaro both as active contribution to cultural change through reproduction and innovative embellishment of adult models, a performative process inherently concerned with “status, power, and control” (Satta 5). This sense of a contained parallel dimension which mimics real life and which is controlled by its skilled performing regulators cannot help but recall another framed space of play: the stage.

An Aery of Little Eyases

A writer known as “Hawk’s-Eye” reviews the plays and players gracing *The Stage of 1871*, and reports that the present time’s chief complaint against the stage is the neglect of

Shakespeare, a failing which he attributes to the support of drama by the educated middle class, and their dislike of tragedy; members of the educated middle class, it would seem,

do not care to sup on horrors. As a class they are better educated than formerly, they are more refined, and have better tastes. This is not the age of hard-drinking, hard-swearing, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and pugilism; nor is it the age that would sit for hours listening to actors ranting and roaring on the stage as they did in the good old times. No, this is the age of improvements, of refinement, of literature, of ragged schools, shoe-black brigades, and universal education. (4)

In his effort to characterize the Victorian theater scene as detrimentally civilized by the taste of its bourgeois consumers, the author contrasts an ideal earlier age whose theatergoers would have approved of and enjoyed the raucous and indulgent horrors of Shakespearean tragedy, with the modern tastes in the “age of improvements.” That the declawing—essentially, given the nature of his nostalgic list of activities, the emasculation—of Shakespeare’s great works should be grouped under the apparently ironic heading of “improvements” first with literature, and finally with an assortment of institutions endemic to the period which are expressly concerned with the organization and improvement of children—the redirection of juvenile energy into productive adult-approved channels—is an important progression for the role of this chapter in my overall argument. In the late Victorian period, there is an unprecedented convergence of children as producers and as consumers of culture, and a consequently parallel wave of social energy directed towards regulation of both of these roles and even consideration of the boundaries between them, and between children and adults. The theater, given its natural parallels with childhood (explored at length in this work), becomes an especially potent site for these kinds of

interactions and conversations, as suggested in the opening passage, and reflected too in institutional concerns about child actors.⁶⁴

In a collection of reprinted essays which initially appeared in the *Temple Bar* magazine, John Doran reports on the goings on *In and About Drury Lane*. In the first volume, he recounts an unfortunate Boxing Day in 1865, when he passed through Drury Lane; the effect of the “general movement” was “not savoury,” and there were “assemblings of children, but alas! nothing lovable in them. It was a universal holiday, yet its aspect was hideous” (1)⁶⁵. Upon arriving at the Drury Lane Theatre, however, first its stage door, and eventually the stage itself, where he came upon the final dress rehearsal of that evening’s pantomime, he was struck by the “change from the external pandemonium to the hive of humming industry” (1). Where without gathered unlovable unsavory hoards of Dickensian urchins, the space within was alive with the warmth of juvenile productivity. Besides boot-blackening and factory working and chimney-sweeping and any number of other notoriously unpleasant and dangerous employments, Victorian children made themselves useful on the stage.

It has proven difficult to determine exact numbers of children working as professional entertainers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but estimates range from five to ten thousand in a given year, with a significant portion of those in London (Horn 38). As Doran’s account suggests, Drury Lane was the largest single employer, but there were “always children about” at other theaters, like the Lyceum, as well (Horn 38). Doran’s account of pantomime

⁶⁴ This convergence in this passage of questionable audience taste and Shakespeare also calls to mind Victorian restagings of Shakespeare which, in their various modes of cultivation and even satire, can be seen as parallel to the educational practices which harness and redirect the performative energies of the mimetic child.

children is specific and informative; he notes that there were generally in excess of two hundred children engaged in a Drury Lane pantomime, more girls than boys. He relates the

curious fact that in engaging these children the manager prefers the quiet and dull to the smart and lively. Your smart lad and girl are given to ‘larking’ and thinking of their own cleverness. The quiet and dull are more ‘teachable,’ and can be made to seem lively without flinging off discipline. These little creatures are thus kept from the streets; many of them are sons and daughters of persons employed in the house, and their shilling a night and a good washing tells pleasantly in many a humble household, to which, on Saturday nights, they contribute their wages and clean faces. (7)

Thus the hive, for Doran, hums not with the larking of smart, self-assured, naturally lively children, but with the docile industry of those quiet and dull ones who, through their teachability are “made to seem lively” and contribute financially to the function of the household. This indicates a resistance to children’s naturally playful instincts, which should make them ideal actors, and suggests a promotion of adult mediation of play. In *Peter Pan*, Barrie will use the performances of Peter, Wendy, and the drama itself to ask the same kinds of uneasy questions which this passage calls to mind, and which critics frequently accuse Barrie of subsuming to child-loving fantasy.

Among those who believed that children should be allowed to keep their places on the stage were Henry Irving of the Lyceum and Augustus Harris, manager of Drury Lane, as well as Parliament and the majority of the general public. The arguments are persuasive; children made more money as actors than in most juvenile occupations, bringing in anywhere from three pence for a provincial pantomime to up to three pounds a week for a leading for at Drury Lane (Horn 44). Besides this, being occupied as an actor kept children off the streets and taught them skills

which would lead to success later in life, as well as allowing them to be “petted.” Noted oppositionists of child actors included the Earl of Shaftesbury, Ellen Barlee, author of *Pantomime Waifs*, and Benjamin Waugh, founder of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children; they objected to the engagement of children in dangerous acts, poor working conditions including late hours, neglect of education and professional training, moral dangers (general erotic attention as well as prostitution), and other health risks. Carolyn Steedman addresses the common concern that pantomime children, having outgrown their roles, would have become essentially addicted to the “excitement and admiration” of the “unhealthy and artificial life” in the theater, and would therefore be ‘rendered unfit for all such honest modes of living as are open to them’ and would be forced to resort to prostitution (Steedman 140-3). There were even arguments like Doran’s made by members of Parliament which cast the child actor as cementing domestic stability, keeping “the broker’s man...out of the home, and the widowed mother...out of the workhouse” (Horn 45). The adverbial language of public and private spaces in this assessment, which will recur below in Doran’s characterization of Master Betty, presents the association of yet another important division—private and public—as well as an emphasis on domestic spaces, both of which bring additional complexity to the adult/child separation, and its connection to the theater, and ultimately, to Peter Pan.

Besides these more practical considerations, though, the most interesting arguments seem to return repeatedly to questions surrounding what Steedman calls the “artful display of childhood’s artless little ways” (134), or to what Varty attempts to express in calling attention to the term “play-acting” as a fusion of playing and acting (10). Ernest Dowson’s essay which shares its title, the “Cult of the Child,” with the social phenomenon, is not only an ode to the child in all his unspoiled glory; it is also, perhaps almost ironically, “a spirited defense of the

right of very young children to work as professional stage performers” (Gubar 153). The text opens with a mention of the Protection of Children’s Bill’s clause on the employment of young children in theaters, and Dowson even professes himself “somewhat divided” on the question, conceding that children should not be “in any way sacrificed for the sake of the public’s amusement” (433). His effort at balance is soon consumed by the ornate enthusiasm of what Gubar calls the “Romantic effusions” of his prose. While there is certainly some overlap with Romantic ideas about childhood here, however, there is also something distinctly Victorian about Dowson’s systematic approach, his selection of examples, and his style. The core of his claims is the assertion that “in childhood we are all spontaneously dramatic,” and that a child “lives all its real life in the kingdom of pretense” (433); this juxtaposition of the real and the imagined, and of the imaginative as both otherworldly and performative, echoes some of the defining characteristics of the transcendental and ultimately the mimetic child. But he offers as an example of juvenile imaginative power the image of a little girl with her doll:

What dramas! What romances! What a wealth of histrionic power is lavished on the wooden puppet! To the gross adult vision it is hideous—even repulsive; it has probably—assuming it to be the best beloved of dolls—a smudged countenance, and a mutilated body, but it suffices to the glorious imagination of seven for an infinity of *roles*...and why should not this charming childish instinct be trained and cultivated for the pleasure of discriminating folk who can appreciate it....it is a pleasure to them; we believe that they delight in it. And if they work hard at it, it must be remembered that they work hard at play. As Montaigne says, “the play of children is not performed in play, but to be judged as their most serious action” (434).

Dowson's language is certainly effusive, but given the fact that the essay is essentially anti-legislative lobbying, and also that it came to be associated with the social and aesthetic movement with which it shares its name (it has even been called a manifesto), it is also important to recognize the complex network of ideas about children and performance present in this passage, which are in very significant dialogue with the arguments of this work as a whole. Here is the image of miniaturization and of dolls, as considered by Kitti Carriker and connected, in Chapter Three, to both *Frankenstein* and *Villette*, and the grotesquerie of the mutilated body. Here too is attention to the adult's violent physical response (repulsion) to his inability to access the child's imaginative way of seeing the world. There is also a vivid image of a child working hard at play, and finally, slipped in subtly, is the impulse to train and cultivate, by adult hands, this otherwise grotesquely incomprehensible power of imagination and performance. The social problem of the infant phenomenon—of child actors in general—and ultimately, of the apparently liberated but ultimately vexed figure of Peter Pan, is grounded in this same network of anxieties, and in the tension between widely varied and often simultaneously held perceptions of performing children as exploited victims of the public appetite for entertainment, as in their natural element, as artfully self-aware and therefore somewhat manipulative performers, and finally, as monstrous in their privileged access to performative power (and consequent reversal of the adult-child power dynamic).

An exploration of the sources of the appeal of child performers generally accompanies critical discussions like Marah Gubar's or Anne Varty's of acting children in the nineteenth century, and the question of art versus artlessness arises again and again. Gubar recognizes that child performers, being "[i]nvolved in an inherently collaborative art form," were perceived as "both artful and natural, both inscribed and original"; she extends this to claim that stage children

“modeled a form of nonautonomous agency in which being scripted by adults did not necessarily preclude them from functioning as intelligent, creative individuals” (Gubar 159). Barish identifies children (along with peasants, savages, and idiots) as existing in a guileless state of “absolute sincerity”; the child “appears to perform without self-consciousness, making no distinction between performance and play” (Varty 10). Varty destabilizes Barish’s absoluteness in the spirit of ambiguity (though there is already some hesitation in the use of “appears”) by reframing the same feature of children in performance as a question, and placing it upon the Victorian stage; “how does child’s play,” she asks, “relate to acting? Is a child playing at pirates to be viewed in the same way as a child performing in *Pirates of Penzance* on the professional stage?” (Varty 10). The straightforward answer seems to be that no, these are not the same, because of mediation by adult theater professionals and the gaze of the adult audience. But the attention to the authenticity of playfulness interrogates the inherent performative tendencies of children and the value of mimetic representation, linking multiple and historically progressive ideas of the performing child including the Romantic transcendental child, whose supernatural access to imaginative spaces grants him a privileged creative power, the mimetic child made monstrous through his performativity, and physical body of the Victorian child actor, subject to legislative regulation.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in his essay on “Child’s Play,” makes vivid the sense of children as existing in a world separate from that of adults; he calls it their “native cloudland,” and reflects that it would be easy to leave them there, especially given that they will be forced out of their gardens soon enough, and into the “office and the witness box “ (qtd in Varty 10). Varty sees in Barrie’s “dubious utopia” the crystallization of these “nostalgic fantasies” but argues that in the time preceding Peter Pan, “the mythological epoch Stevenson identified could be glimpsed

in the theatre, through performances by individual stage children” (10). The image of the Victorian performing child as existing in an edenic imaginative state was certainly not the only contemporary conception, as the comments of Doran and Horn above imply. The increased demand for child actors following the 1843 deregulation of the theaters was eventually followed by efforts to regulate and protect the lives of these performers; an 1879 act sought to protect children from engaging in dangerous performances, but its vague wording and lack of enforcement agency led to its becoming a dead letter. Ten years later, the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Bill was passed, and part of its legislation regulated employment of children in public entertainment. Pamela Horn calls her essay on children in the English theatre between 1880 and 1914 a “study in ambivalence”; while I have demonstrated consistent feelings of ambivalence towards children—particularly in their recurring associations with the theater—the ambivalence here derives primarily from the fraught convergence of the Romantic fascination with and idealization/idolization of the child figure, the child’s physical body as recipient of the gaze, and the late Victorian impulse to improve through institutionalization.

Accounts of children in the nineteenth-century theater scene are rarely without a mention of the famous Master Betty, the most famous child star at the turn of the nineteenth century, debuting in Ireland in 1803 at age eleven, drawing such significant crowds at the peak of his career that they required special policing, and receiving a request for an introduction from the King and Prince of Wales before quitting the stage in 1808 (Varty 79). Master Betty and other child actors like him often played adult roles and were extolled for their ability to express emotions they could not have experienced, seeming in their resulting popularity to “confirm the Romantic view of children as agents of divine genius, animated by original powers they could not control and did not understand” (Varty 79). Doran explains that Master Betty’s father, whose

intellectual tastes were in keeping with those of his wife, in repeating to his son Cardinal Wolsey's speech from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, "suited the action to the word," as Hamlet's ideal players do; Young Betty, having never before seen such a performance asked his father about it, thought over it, and then "tried by himself action and motion with elocution, and he spoke and acted the cardinal's soliloquy before his mother with an effect that excited in her the greatest surprise and admiration" (19). Thus while the child prodigy is in some conceptions a divine conduit for Romantic sensibility, his origins are also grounded in a domestic mimetic moment of observation, reenactment, and well-received performance.

In his account of Master Betty, Doran distinguishes between a "parlour child" and a "nursery child," placing the Infant Roscius squarely in the first category, meaning that he was a child who interacted frequently with his parents, specifically his mother, for whose reading and recitation he was audience (a dynamic which would eventually be reversed). The use of this terminology locates the question of child performers physically in the domestic space of the home, and represents the precocity, performativity, and premature adulthood of the infant phenomenon as transgressive. More at home in the adult space of entertaining than in the nurturing space of child rearing, the child actor is already an anomaly, since he is able to enter into adult spaces and function comfortably therein; this is especially problematic when children's spaces have proven to be off limits to adults. The distinction also associates once again with child performers issues of public and private spaces, and the association of the theater with the former and the novel with the latter, as emphasized by Litvak and discussed in Chapter Three. Because of the connections between the theater and the child established throughout this work, and as children become a more direct object of social attention through regulation, there is an even more integral link with Victorian ideas about that which is concealed within the particular

spaces of the home, and that which is available for public viewing and mediation. This is reflected in the demonstration of social ambiguity towards child welfare seen in debates about child actors (moderated by Benjamin Waugh and his nascent National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) and “a parent’s right to dispose of his or her child’s labour to best advantage” (Horn 47). The questions of regulation and problematic accessibility in relation to domestic and imaginative spaces are also, of course, a defining characteristic of Barrie’s Peter Pan narrative in all its generic incarnations.

In his section on Master Betty in his history of *Old Drury Lane* (1881) Edward Stirling includes a satirical “*jeu-d’esprit*” which looks back on the public obsession with “precocious children’s acting” from a post-Dickensian perspective (174). He invents an advertisement for a performance by one “Miss Biddy Suckling”—“not yet quite four years old!”—in the role of “The Infant Caliban”; he notes that though she has had to put her roles as Coriolanus, Henry VIII, and Shylock on hold until she recovers from her “hooping-cough,” the public must have perceived that the disorder “is rather friendly than otherwise to her performance of Caliban” (174-5). By casting the infant as Caliban, Varty argues, Stirling “emphasises the monstrosity both of the performing child and of the taste to applaud her. He compounds this by naming her ‘suckling’ like a pig and by trumpeting a disease, whooping-cough, as a virtue of her performance” (80). The satire also suggests that precocious child actors are “loved, feared, abhorred, and finally abandoned. If Master Betty was an inspired genius, then his alter ego Biddy Suckling was a freakish monster. Original and distorted copy illuminate one another” (Varty 80). Here Varty exposes in mimetic terms the duality of the child actor as performing monster (as seen in *Frankenstein*) and as public pleasure.

This chapter, and the preceding ones, have already established the ambiguity with which performing children have been viewed and represented over the years, but the pairing of the beloved Master Betty here with the ridiculous suckling Bidy is a division (along gendered lines) of the views of the mimetic child and its social integration. Where Betty is a public darling, his satirical sister Bidy Suckling is a monster; but the heavy-handedness of her monstrosity highlights the more subtle but no less present sense of any child acting prodigy as freakish. This freakishness is due at least in part to the inexplicability by adults of the child's mimetic talents; Varty writes that “[g]enius is manifest by the expression of feelings unknown to the demonstrator...but it sits cheek by jowl with mimicry, aping, and the grotesque” (81). Varty also turns here to Susan Stewart, whose work on the miniature is featured in my previous chapter, to suggest that the “classification of children as miniature adults affords culture a way to contain and dominate the natural. Diminution does not lessen the child's monstrosity, nor its potency as an agent of primordial anarchy, but brings these features within the boundaries of civilization” (Varty 80-81).

Dickens' “Infant Phenomenon” appears in *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1838, long after the unceremonious retirement of the overgrown Master Betty, and her portrayal is a harsh comment on the persistent trend of featured juvenile performers which highlights key criticisms of child performers.⁶⁶ Dickens emphasizes the disingenuousness of the promotion of the ingénue by contrasting her apparent age with her advertised age, and by emphasizing her physical ungainliness. Even her name seems to play upon the imbalance of her status as a graceful (if stagey) feminine juvenile phenomenon (Ninetta), and her reality (Crummles). This juxtaposition

⁶⁶ Curiously, Miss Crummles also features in a number of early twentieth-century excerpt books and recontextualizations in the style of Mary Cowden Clarke of children from Dickens novels. These include Samuel McChord Crothers' *The Children of Dickens* (1925), and *Boys & Girls from Dickens*, among others.

continues through the scene of her initial representation; the infant phenomenon is a “little girl in a dirty white frock with tucks up to the knees” and “short trousers” whose stage entrance and movement in a ballet interlude are described twice in one paragraph as “bounding” (217).

Nicholas’ “bravo!” in response to her performance is attributed to his resolve “to make the best of everything” (217); even the good-hearted and optimistic Nicholas cannot help but be skeptical of the girl’s ostensibly prodigious talent.

Not only is the girl of dubious appeal and exceptionality, the “Infant” epithet is also called indecorously into question. Poor Nicholas, ever at the mercy of Dickens and his narration, politely questions Mr. Crummles as to the girl’s age, leading her father/manager to look “steadily in his questioner’s face, as some men do when they have doubts about being / implicitly believed in what they are going to say,” and reply that she is “ten years of age, and not a day more” (218).

Nicholas finds this extraordinary; the narrator confirms that is indeed so,

for the infant phenomenon, though of short stature, had a comparatively aged countenance, and had moreover been precisely the same age--not perhaps to the full extent of the memory of the oldest inhabitant, but certainly for five good years. But she had been kept up late every night, and put upon an unlimited allowance of gin-and-water from infancy, to prevent her growing tall, and perhaps this system of training had produced in the infant phenomenon these additional phenomena. (218)

Dickens’ acerbic characterization of the girl (who in her own person is unusually neutral) is at once a criticism of the practices surrounding child actors, and a fundamental disarming of the mimetic potency of the child performer. Dickens is certainly aware of the performative power of children, investing them heavily throughout his works with menace masked by an obsequious performance of humility (Uriah Heep), pathos (Little Nell), or symbolic value for adult morality

(Tiny Tim); but the Infant Phenomenon for Dickens represents a disempowerment of children's natural performative qualities by the practices of adult mediation and public exploitation.

In his inclusion of the debunking by Mr. Folair, one of the troupe's own actors, of the stage myth of the infant phenomenon, Dickens invokes a parallel critique of the craze for child actors from more than two hundred years earlier, documented in the exchange between Hamlet and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern upon the players' arrival at Elsinore. Folair takes issue with both her infancy ("infant humbug," he says) and her phenomenality: "[t]here isn't a female child of common sharpness in a charity school that couldn't do better than that" (219). But his main objection seems to be motivated by her hindrance of his own professional and financial success: the "little sprawler" is "put up in the best business every night, and actually keeping money out of the house, but being forced down the people's throats" (219) while others like himself are passed over despite having audience members who have come to watch him in particular. Similarly, the popularity of the traveling troupe of actors in *Hamlet* has waned, due to the "tyrannical clapp[ing]" of the public for the fad of "little eyases / that cry out on top of the question" (2.ii.339-40). Hearing this, Hamlet asks a series of questions which are in striking parallel to those which populate Victorian debates about performing children: "[w]hat, are they children? Who maintains 'em? how are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing?" and what will become of them once they "grow themselves to common players—as it is most like, if their means are no better"? (345-50). That these questions of children as performers define the fictional representations of real historical trends and take such similar shapes in such temporally diverse works—and in works whose authors have elsewhere demonstrated keen awareness of the efficacy of the mimetic child (as shown herein)—suggests the value of considering another, later, quite distinct set of works which also depend upon

questioning the performativity of children and invoking Shakespeare in the process: the texts which comprise the Peter Pan narrative.

“Betwixt-and-Between”: Peter Pan’s Generic Instability

Peter Pan first appears in 1902 in J.M. Barrie’s prose story *The Little White Bird, or Adventures in Kensington Gardens*; the British and American theatrical premieres of the stage play *Peter Pan* were in 1904 and 1905, respectively. *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, which recounts Peter’s escape from the nursery and his adventures in the gardens among the birds and fairies, consists of excerpted chapters from *The Little White Bird* which focus on Peter, and was published in 1906, followed in 1911 by *Peter and Wendy*, the novelization of the story of the Darlings and their adventures with Peter in the Never Land, which evolved on the stage and comprise the general narrative most familiar in the modern popular imagination. The title of this work was eventually changed to *Peter Pan*, adding to the fogginess surrounding the story’s origins. The playscript remained unpublished until 1928.

Like the story itself, much of the criticism which surrounds the Peter Pan narrative is concerned with the separation of and relationship between adult and child, and their spheres of consciousness; this extends, too, into critiques which focus on Barrie’s biography and suggestions of his pedophilia, or at least his lack of appropriate maintenance of boundaries between the adult and juvenile worlds. The reason the work has proven so difficult to critics—and that they so often insist on reading Peter Pan in relation to Barrie’s own personal history—(besides just the overlap between life and art in Barrie’s work, and its publishing trajectory) is that Barrie’s narrative (and theatrical) structures and devices rely upon a deliberate and often

satirical awareness of that separation⁶⁷. This playfulness some critics find inappropriate. Jacqueline Rose, for example, whose influential study of the Peter Pan narrative challenges the possibility of fiction for children, “takes Barrie to task for his shifting narrative voice, or lack of narrative identity, and for violating certain boundaries which should keep child and adult apart” (Hollindale xxiv): “The demand for better and more cohesive writing in children’s fiction,” writes Rose, “carries with it a plea that certain psychic barriers should go undisturbed, the most important of which is the barrier between adult and child. When children’s fiction touches on that barrier...it becomes not experiment but *molestation*. Thus the writer for children must keep his or her narrative hands clean and stay in his or her place” (70). More recent critics recognize the datedness of Rose’s hyperconsciousness and demand focus on the text itself: “Did I miss a crucial scene in Barrie’s story?” Allison Kavey asks, criticizing what she sees as Rose’s consistent conflation of “the sexual abuse of children with the literary text of *Peter Pan*” (4).⁶⁸

Despite the variety of critical opinion on the issue, the fact is that Barrie’s writing—and further, his ongoing generic transfigurations—offers a complex and self-aware narrative reflection of the negotiations between child and adult, and of the performances demanded by each. Many critics, like Rose, are interested in what this might say about children’s literature as a genre; Martha Stoddard Holmes writes (explicitly challenging Rose in her essay’s title “Peter Pan and the Possibilities of Child Literature”),

⁶⁷ This is not to suggest that connections to Barrie’s biography cannot be intriguing, especially when they don’t involve accusations. In an anecdote which seems to be of particular relevance here, John Lahr describes Barrie’s attempts, at age six, to console his mother after the death of his elder brother: he “took to imitating David’s look, his posture, even his way of whistling. He became, in other words, a kind of apparition, whose goal was to animate the dead and keep grief at bay” (80).

⁶⁸ She notes further that by that line of reasoning, “Beatrix Potter should be posthumously hanged by animal welfare groups for the ideas in *Peter Cottontail*,” a persuasive if flippant point only slightly tarnished by the surprising misappellation of Potter’s iconic text (4).

[w]ith their hybrid narrative voice; thematic emphasis on adult-child conflict, insecurity, pain, loss, and death; and mixed tone of sentiment and cynicism, the Peter Pan fictions have become an emblem for the problematic investment of adult writers (and readers) in writing ‘for’ children that serves the adult’s own need for an imagined concept of childhood, a situation suggested by Barrie’s biography but potentially applicable to all adults. (Holmes 133)

Hollindale, too, like Rose and Holmes and many other critics, wonders whether Barrie addresses himself generally to adult or to child readers. *The Little White Bird*, in which Peter first appears, was published as a novel for adults, and only the excerpts published as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* in 1906 were specifically for child readers. It is the “layers of narrative address” which are most interesting to Hollindale; in *The Little White Bird* he recognizes moments where the voice is “private and intimate,” a “cunning form of domestic speech” directed towards the characters, in response to which the “public reader feels intrusive” (xxi). This narrative play continues into the various Peter Pan stories, and assumes a different role in the stage script, finding its way into “unactable” (Hollindale 312n) stage directions.

The implications of these unusual qualities, though, extend beyond broad questions relating to the genre of children’s literature. In the context both of the overall claims of this work, and of this chapter’s argument about Victorian performing children and the evolution of the mimetic child from literary to living, breathing, reading, and acting—and the relation of adults to these youthful figures—the Peter Pan story is of particular significance because it depicts a literal navigation (second star to the right) of the channels between the adult world of reality and the imaginative realms of childhood, and brings to the forefront questions of accessibility. Of further relevance is the importance of performance to the story, both

thematically, and in terms of the developmental impact of the narrative's time on the stage.

Finally, the characterization of Peter Pan (and of children in general as “gay and innocent and heartless” [Barrie 226]), the story's generic instability, the critical debate which surrounds it, and the suspicion about its author, all situate it within the context of mimetic monstrosity established in the previous chapter.

Chapter Three considers the monstrosity which results from adult perceptions of children which are colored by anxiety generated by the threat of juvenile imitative and creative power, but also touches on the occasional striking coldness and cruelty perceivable in child characters, frequently linked to their mimetic qualities and performative tendencies; the Peter Pan story makes this heartlessness into a thematic. “Like the best children's stories,” Allison Kavey writes, “it reveals the nastiest aspects of childhood, rather than simply genuflecting at the alters of innocence and youth” (3). Hollindale too recognizes “a sharp and sometimes ferocious dialectic” lurking beneath the surface of the children's book, but he suggests that it is also an “explor[ation of] the collision and relation of the child and adult worlds” (xxi). Barrie uses genre, and the conception of children as monstrous in their performativity (seen even in Dowson's “Cult of the Child” essay, quoted above), to explore the boundaries between these worlds, and the theatrical means which naturally ruthless children adopt to navigate them.

The generic progression of the Peter Pan story is an important aspect of its own character, and is also what makes it such an ideal endpoint for discussion of the mimetic child as progressing from the works of Shakespeare. Given the dependency of my argument on genre and generic transformation, since the mimetic child is traced through Shakespeare's plays, prose adaptations of them, and nineteenth-century novels, often with Shakespearean tendencies—it is appropriate that the century and the argument close with study of this uniquely multi-generic

work. It is unusual to see one character transplanted by one author into four different literary contexts. The characteristics of each, as expressed by the very fact of the genre shift, on a thematic level within the texts, and how these representation change from one context to the next one, are connected to various facets of the argument about the mimetic child.

Where Peter Pan Landed

Peter Pan makes his literary debut as one of many colorful characters peopling the landscape of Kensington Gardens⁶⁹, where the narrator and his young friend like to perambulate. The work in which he first appears, *The Little White Bird*, was published as an adult novel, and in Rose's phrasing, in order for the story of Peter Pan to "become a work for children, it was extracted from its source, transformed into a play, and sent out on its own. *Peter Pan* emerges, therefore, out of an unmistakable act of censorship" (5). Rose describes the novel as "a story told by the narrator to a little boy whom the narrator was trying to steal" (5). Rose's language in both these instances is manipulative and is in fact contradictory; the book is explicitly dedicated, and handed over for reading, at its conclusion and as part of the narrative, not to David, but to his mother; in the final chapter, they discuss its contents with David present in the room, but curiously withdrawn from the narrative. His mother comments on an aspect of the book "in a lower voice, as if David must not hear" (309). Furthermore, given that the book is frequently so

⁶⁹ Also among these are Miss Mabel Grey, who had been a pattern-child until "one day she tired of it all and went mad-dog" (5). Barrie explains that the children you might encounter in the Broad Walk usually have a grown-up with them "to prevent them going on the damp grass, and to make them stand disgraced at the corner of a seat if they have been mad-dog or Mary-Annish. To be Mary-Annish is to behave like a girl, whimpering because your nurse won't carry you, or simpering with your thumb in your mouth, and it is a hateful quality; but to be mad-dog is to kick out at everything, and there is some satisfaction in that."

clearly directed towards an adult audience, with the exception of the Peter Pan chapters, which are softer in tone and have a clear shift in the intended recipient of Barrie's use of the second person pronoun, the extraction seems less an act of censorship than one of literary categorization. In the first chapter, for example, the narrator asks, "has it ever been your lot, reader, to be persecuted by a pretty woman who thinks...that you are bowed down under a hopeless partiality for her?" (1), while he states near the beginning of his chapter on Peter Pan, that the reason no one has ever seen the whole of Kensington Gardens is that it is so soon time to turn back because "you sleep from twelve to one. If your mother was not so sure that you sleep from twelve to one, you could most likely see the whole of them" (127). As these contrasting passages suggest, Barrie's work appears to be directed towards two distinct audiences, which, while unusual, does not seem like a violation; his choice to extract the Peter Pan chapters, in fact, suggests an awareness, on a literary level at least, of the boundary which Rose so venomously accuses Barrie of "molesting."

A 1902 review of the novel by Arthur Quiller-Couch addresses the elusiveness of Barrie's treatment of genre and audience: "it does not look to me like a book written for children, and it looks even less like a book written for grown-ups. You may say, and plausibly, that it was written by a fairy for fairies; or, still better, that it was written by a contrite fairy for fairy changelings; but I should prefer to call it a book written by the child inside Mr. Barrie for the children we used to be" (50). While Quiller-Couch seems more focused on the fantastical sections of the book, his review nonetheless identifies in Barrie's work an interesting dynamic of writer and audience in time and space which depends in a distant way upon adult-child relations. Rather than a simple author-reader connection, this image presents a child—presumably Barrie himself, as a child, but even this is not clearly stated—responsible for the writing act, using

Barrie as a conduit, directed towards children in an inaccessible past, through passive adult readers. Thus the text is read as a message sent from one child to another while both are contained within adult spaces of body and memory. This sense of ethereal storytelling, independent communication between children and the secondariness of adult presences suggests juvenile creative empowerment, a thematic which is reinforced by the assumption in Barrie's narrative style of an uncannily childlike perspective, a self-conscious awareness of the distinction between this way of seeing and the adult's more stilted points of view, and the granting of narrative authority to products of the juvenile imagination. This latter feature is apparent, for example, in the discussion the lady with the balloons who sits outside the Gardens, and who cannot let go of the railings for one moment because "the balloons would lift her up, and she would be flown away." (3). Once, we are told, the woman "was a new one, because the old one had let go, and David was very sorry for the old one, but as she did let go, he wished he had been there to see" (3). The narrator is an adult, certainly, approaching the Gardens with David, but his perceptions of other adults, and of the surrounding world, are presented from the perspective of a child, yet with the convincing authority of his adult narrative voice, an important collaborative tension expressed more fully in the passage (discussed below) in which the narrator explains "our way with a story," the plural pronoun implicating the narrator himself and David, but also expanding the act of creation to include all his juvenile readers and their eager imaginations.

While there is much of interest to be said about the very unusual, ranging, and occasionally dark text of *The Little White Bird*, consideration of a few brief passages should suffice to establish its role in the development of the Peter Pan story as relates to the concerns of this chapter and of the mimetic child as a literary and dramatic figure heading into the twentieth

century. These passages also highlight what is “adult” about this novel, as compared with the material—often thematically similar, and sometimes with the same tones of melancholy or darkness—deemed fit for children.

The novel begins and ends with strange discussions of David’s mother. The narrator introduces David perplexingly as “the little boy who calls me father” (1). In his irritated description of David’s mother—who seems to be under the quite mistaken apprehension that the narrator is “bowed down under a hopeless partiality for her”—he writes that “[h]er laugh is very like David’s, whom I could punch all day to hear him laugh. I dare say she put this laugh into him. She has been putting qualities into David, altering him, turning him for ever on a lathe since the day she first knew him, and indeed for a long time before, and all so deftly that he is still called a child of nature” (3). The passage communicates a strange and quiet violence, representative of the inevitable oppression of children by parents and other adults; despite his tone of loathing, the narrator himself cannot avoid his own complicity in the treatment of a child as at best an entertaining puppet, and at worst, a victim of constant abuse. While “punch” appears to be used here in the obscure sense of poking or nudging, perhaps tickling, the odd word choice inevitably carries the implications of the word’s far more common usage, then as now,⁷⁰ particularly when followed up with the disturbing representation of maternal child-rearing (and even pregnancy) as a series of quotidian craftsman-like tasks in which the child is a completely passive and physically manipulated victim.

⁷⁰ The OED cites instances under the same definition of punch as “a straight or thrusting blow” from *Treasure Island* (1883), where Jim Hawkins is woken from sleep by a rough but not menacing “punch in the ribs”, and from *Wuthering Heights* (1847) where the volatile Heathcliff is shown “checking the fiercer demonstrations” of one of his revealingly ill-tempered dogs “with a punch of his foot.” Thus it seems that even in its less directly confrontational usage, the word packs a little violence.

Given the discomfort (including the narrator's own) present in this passage with the unavailability of children being subjected to adult interference (including narrative interference), the extraction of the Peter Pan chapters seems to be an attempt to use literary form as redress for this unfortunate truth. This first step in the development of Peter Pan and his story is an example of Gubar's claim that Barrie, like other writers of his period, was "self-conscious about the fact that adult-produced stories shape children" and used elements of his work to express a hope that "while a complete escape from adult influence is not possible—young people might dodge the fate of functioning as passive parrots" (6). This hope is also seen in the representation of children as "artful collaborators," capable of "reshaping stories" (Gubar 6). The narrative style and tone of the chapters in *The Little White Bird* which end up being excerpted as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* are distinct precisely because of the textual representation of this collaboration; narrated "with rather than to" the boy David, the Peter Pan chapters adopt a tone of "conspiratorial, self-abnegating, child-centered satire" (Hollindale 1991 xx). The narrator explains his and David's "way with a story": "first I tell it to him, and then he tells it to me, the understanding being that it is quite a different story; and then I retell it with his additions, and so we go on until no one could say whether the story is his or mine" (13). He holds himself responsible, as an adult, for the "bald narrative" and "moral reflections," while David is credited with the "interesting bits" (Barrie, *Little* 13). Thus David is given independent narrative agency as a performer in the storytelling process, definitely a collaborator, and an innovative one, in the style of the mimetic child.

Another "adult" moment in the "Pleasantest Club in London" chapter (not included in *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*) highlights the contrast in tone as well as another significant thematic, familiar from the previous chapter's discussion of *Frankenstein*—that of the power and

performativity of the (gendered) storytelling act. The narrator recounts David's nursemaid Irene's telling of the story of Cinderella; the representation of Irene is at once cynical and slightly cruel, and favorable, marveling at her commitment to storytelling, her childlike devotion to her one story, and the effect she is capable of producing on her juvenile audience. Irene "gazes into vacancy" as she tells the story, causing David to think it is really happening "somewhere up the Broad Walk," and "when she came to its great moments her little bosom heaved" (125). Though there is mild condescension in the characterization of Irene's melodramatic methods (and especially in the precise recording of her dialect: "[n]ever shall I forget the concentrated scorn with which the prince said to the sisters, 'Neither of you ain't the one what wore the glass slipper'") (Barrie *Little* 117), she is nonetheless represented as capturing David's attention, and as betraying her own youth in her complete, even physical, involvement in the narrative.

Despite the narrator's arch superiority, and the fact that he sees Irene as a rival for David's allegiance, the chapter concludes with a typically Barriesque tender melancholy; the narrator claims to have discovered "this little girl's secret. She knows there are no fairy godmothers nowadays, but she hopes if she is always true and faithful she may someday turn into a lady in word and deed"; but "[i]t is a dead secret," he concludes heartbreakingly, "A Drury Lane child's romance; but what an amount of heavy artillery will be brought to bear against it in this sad London of ours. Not much chance for her, I suppose. Good luck to you, Irene" (126). In this moment of storytelling, made performative through the nature of her narrative style, and explicitly through the reference to Drury Lane, Irene assumes the role of imaginative child (albeit a more pathetic one than we are used to seeing). The melancholy narrative hopelessness removes Irene from her imaginative context, and from the theater, and places her squarely in the park in the middle of "this sad London." To remove Peter Pan and his wondrous tales from this

context of morose adult resignation is to make a movement, in a time where this kind of dark emphasis was being brought to bear on legislation and other writings which considered the social realities of children, as performers, and in other situations, towards a re-empowerment of the independent juvenile imagination.

Like Milne's Hundred Acre Wood, or Tolkien's Middle Earth, Kensington Gardens is depicted cartographically at the front of its literary text (in both *The Little White Bird*, and *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*). Unlike these realms, though, Kensington Gardens is of course a real place, represented mythologically and with reference to the story's fantastical and infantile landmarks—including the place where Peter Pan landed his boat. Not only are some real park features given fanciful names, but there are also entirely imaginary aspects added. This rough correspondence with reality, and the incursion of the imaginative into real and familiar public spaces, as well as the impulse to include a map as reference is pictorial evidence of the kind of dividedness which the story is troubled by on textual and generic levels. The inclusion of the map also grounds the text in its own status as prose narrative, and looks ahead to Barrie's reflections on the mapping of children's minds—or "the Neverland"; the map is confused, and "keeps going round all the time," because it attempts to represent both the fantastical wild spaces of the Neverland, with its coral reefs and caves, and "gnomes who are mostly tailors," as well as "the first day of school, religion, fathers, the Round Pond, needlework, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative, . . . and so on" (*Wendy* 73-74). Even within the confines of the imagination, there is a complicated relation between the fanciful and the mundane (inextricably tied up with anxieties about the adult world); the invocation of the practice of mapping suggests an ongoing effort to gain control of these components and their various borders and boundaries through

identification, naming, and division. Mapping is itself, ultimately, a form of storytelling, which narrates the history and importance of physical separations and landmarks.

Peter Pan's first introduction is in the context of multi-generational adult memory and storytelling; "your mother" and "your grandmother" both remember Peter. He is "ever so old," though "he is really always the same age"—one week—since that is how old he was when he "escaped from being a human...by the window and flew back to Kensington Gardens" (Barrie, *Kensington* 12). Peter's origin story is grounded in the odd assumption, treated by Barrie as common knowledge, that all children were birds before they were human and that they therefore experience an instinctual desire, in their early days, "to return to the tree-tops" (13). Arriving there, though, he fails to function properly as a bird, or to be accepted by the birds, he is told by the wise of Solomon Caw that it is because he is and will always be a "Betwixt-and-Between" (Barrie, *Kensington* 17). In the midst of this unsettledness, though, thousands of birds "gather round him daily just to watch him" washing or drinking or eating, and they "scream with delight" (17). Having escaped the confines of domesticity, but not quite been able to infiltrate his new natural society, the physical rituals of Peter's everyday life become a spectacle. There is a parallel here, too, with the idea that voyeuristic adults come to watch and cheer at innocent children simple at play on the stage, and that parallel becomes more pronounced in Barrie's transportation of Peter from Kensington Gardens to the Duke of York Theatre.

Peter Pan Flies into the Room

In 1904, Peter takes the stage. It seems important to note at this point, given the attention to Victorian child performers and the extension of the comments on Master Betty, whose fame peaked in the early years of the nineteenth century, that Barrie's is a very different theatrical and

literary scene. The play is not Victorian in its sensibilities, and Barrie's own desire for Peter to be played by a young boy was undermined by government regulations limiting the performance capacities of children under fourteen. Therefore, while this work operates in a distinctly different historical context from the other texts, and many of the conceptual frameworks considered herein, this positioning renders it only more fitting to serve as a culmination of the argument, and a passageway by which the figure of the mimetic child passes, perhaps not unscathed—but not grown up—into the twentieth century.

Varty notes that the play “carries the freight of a long tradition of thought about the significance of the child,” (10) particularly in terms of nostalgic fantasies of childhood innocence, but also as concerned with children as natural performers. Thus this “freight” can refer not only to thought about children in general, but also about the more focused questions surrounding this work's focus on the mimetic child. Those traits which allow for a parallel discomfort with the natural performative tendencies of children, and with the theater—including the otherworldliness and insularity of access to imaginative spaces, precocity, cruelty, and the association with the capacity for creation—all find their way into the Peter Pan narrative, with significant variations between generic incarnations.

Barrie's obsessive compulsion to revise is discussed above, but it is even more interesting in the context of his stage plays, since the genre is already more naturally inclined to adaptive processes and collaboration. Dramatic literature, more than any other genre, is affected by its integration into society and its consequent regulation. Unlike a novel, which, although it may be censored, is a self-contained entity, a play, at least in generic theory, is in its very form in dynamic interaction with the spaces in which it might be performed and the regulations which govern those spaces. Playscripts, therefore, respond to and comment on the circumstances and

restrictions of their performances, and often change in the moment depending on situational factors; this tendency echoes the representative division between the theater and the novel, addressed by Joseph Litvak and discussed in Chapter Three, as associated in the nineteenth century with the designations of public and private. Linking the rise of the novel as representational mode with the rise of the private bourgeois individual, Litvak then contrasts this interiority specifically with the public space(s) of the theater catering to the chaotic masses and the hedonism of the aristocratic classes, a distinction which allows for the fascinating extension discussed briefly above to the arguments about the division(s) between adults and performing children (as associated with the theater).

Even once Peter had found a momentarily stabilized position as a dramatic character, Barrie continued to modify, experiment, and revise. In part this was practical, and due to his admirable conception of a theatrical performance as a collaboration between himself and his actors and directors. But Hollindale points out deeper reasons for his ongoing revision, including the tension in many of Barrie's plays "between change and changelessness" (x), and the paradoxical psychological condition of "inexhaustible adaptation within fixity" (xi). While "Wendy is no more capable of permanent habitation of the Never Land than Peter is of growing up in Bloomsbury," for example, "both are capable of multiple behaviour in imaginative play" (xi). Beyond even this recognition of the relationship between fixity and adaptation, and of role-playing as adaptive process, though, there seems to be in Barrie's transplanting of his extant and ever-evolving character, and the story and characters who surround him, to the stage, a distinct awareness of the historical, generic, and thematic significance of that relocation. The framing of Peter Pan's story as a dramatic narrative brings out important ideas already present but not yet maximized about the navigation of the child-adult boundary, and related imaginative and

domestic spaces, through performative activity, and these dramatic markings remain a permanent fixture of the story.

Just as, according to David Kurnick, writers' theatrical failures resonate in their later successful novels, a story retold in a different form bears fossil-like traces of the genre traits of its earlier incarnations. This is certainly the case with the Peter Pan narrative; already characterized by its attention to mimetic tendencies and Peter's status as betwixt-and-between the adult domestic world and the imaginative natural space of the Kensington Garden society of birds, the story takes advantage of its time on the stage to expand and highlight these theatrical thematics, which then either resurface, or are interrogated through revision in their reframing into prose in *Peter and Wendy*.

Because the stage play was in constant evolution, and the playscript was not published until 1928, the 1911 novel *Peter and Wendy* serves as a representation of the intermediary evolutionary stages of the play, filtered (and re-filtered) through Barrie's evident distinction between the writing of a novel and the writing of a play. Though *Peter and Wendy* is often described as a "novelization" of the play, I would argue that Barrie conceives of the novel as an independent entity with different characteristics, filling a different role, a fact supported by the eventual publication of the playscript. It is in these specific characteristics of the play, and the quality of the transformation of individual moments and ideas from their original appearance in prose form (and eventually back into prose form), that the aspects of the story in which the kind of ambivalence recognized by Gubar about children, and the kind of ambivalence toward the agency of performance which colors anxieties towards both children and the theater, emerge as more than just shadows.

It is only once the story has been moved into the theater, for example, that we experience the great theatrical transgression of Peter Pan's entry into the nursery space. In the earlier depiction of Peter, his adventures are centralized (as the map and narrative make very clear) within the confines of Kensington Gardens, a space continually characterized by its various boundaries and barriers. It even presents the reader with a sort of narrative exclusivity, since the story begins with the assertion that it will be difficult to follow Peter's adventures unless you are familiar with the Kensington Gardens. Then the gardens are described as "bounded on one side by a neverending line of omnibuses," as having many gates, which are locked at particular times so that the fairies may begin their revelries, and as being subdivided into areas like "the Figs," a fenced-in play area for "superior little persons," from which "a rebel Fig" will occasionally climb "over the fence into the world" (4). The only depictions of Peter outside the gardens are the brief mention of his initial departure at one week old from the nursery via the window, and the unsettling visits he makes to his mother. In the first one, he flies in the window to where his mother lies sleeping and sits on the railing of her bed imagining their reunion and playing his pipes, and eventually he flies away without waking her. When he returns again, "for ever and always," "the window was closed, and there were iron bars on it, and peering inside he saw his mother sleeping peacefully with her arm around another boy" (40). The subdued performativity of this history, and the apparent trauma of the iron bars' finality suggest a clear division between child and adult worlds, and the respective association of these with imagination and nature, and with containment and domesticity. The practice of visiting and revisiting the nursery, attempting entry, and even the question of iron bars—will recur in various later version of the Peter Pan story, reinforcing the conception of the story as thematically exploring children's performative navigational practices.

There are two initial indicators in *Peter and Wendy* of the illicit entrance of Peter into the Darlings' nursery; the first is when Mrs Darling is surprised to come across the name Peter during her nightly process of "tidying up her child's minds" (73). Barrie's fascinating elaboration of this recurring maternal custom explains that it's "quite like tidying up drawers," and that mothers might linger "humourously over some of your contents, wondering where you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet" and then folding up the "naughtiness and evil passions" and placing them at the bottom of the mind (73). Since Barrie goes on to characterize "the Neverland" explicitly as the mind of a child, this moment becomes an invasive (albeit well-meaning) adult procedure which attempts to regulate the child's imaginative space. The sudden and inexplicable appearance of Peter "scrawled all over" Wendy's mind, and "here and there" in John's and Michael's, is a challenge to Mrs Darling's parental authority, suggesting an uncontrollable imaginative power that exists outside the realm of adult understanding. The first indication of Peter's physical presence—also found in Chapter 1, "Peter Breaks Through"—is a few leaves just below the nursery window, leaves which Mrs Darling is sure "did not come from any tree that grew in England" (77). Thus Peter as a disruptive presence asserts himself in the form of the disordering of domestic space, as an unexpected and unsortable object in a drawer, and as a dirty little mess on the nursery floor, and also as an uncontrollable inscription on the juvenile imagination. Arguments have been made about the sexuality of this moment—of Wendy's sudden, independent, and internalized awareness of this male presence—but the image of his name standing out in bold letters, with an "oddly cocky appearance" (74) is still more suggestive of artistic creation (though this is here as often partnered with or prologue to sexual awakening).

These particular precursors to Peter's physical arrival are present only in the novel, which frequently takes advantage of the interiority of its genre to pursue the dominant image of the human mind as a mappable space, of which the Neverland becomes a physical embodiment. In the playscript, Peter's arrival is presaged only by Nana's bark, and then the expressly theatrical moment which introduces the iconic boy, preceded by "another light, no larger than Mrs Darling's fist" (Barrie 1.1) which, in the novel, is "a thousand times brighter than the night-lights" (Barrie, *Wendy* 88), and which, in both, is Tinker Bell. In both versions, there is an evident awareness of the play of light in the scene, but the directions given in the playscript are distinctly theatrical, and Barrie demonstrates an awareness that this moment cannot have exactly the same effect in a prose narrative. Hollindale writes that "speech is only one of theatre's several languages," and (xvi), and that it is Barrie's facility with others—including silence, movement and stillness, mime and tableau, dance and music, ritualized effect, and, I would add, effects of stagecraft like lighting—which define his strength as a playwright, and as a storyteller more broadly. In the play *Peter Pan*, there is no speech between Mrs Darling's good night appeal to the protective power of the night-lights—"the eyes a mother leaves behind her to guard her children"—and Peter's first lines, after the night-lights have gone out. At this transitional moment when the children are left alone, presumably between waking and dream-filled sleep, and as the audience stares at the darkened stage (as they will again, awaiting the appearance of the Never Land, described below), they are led to expect that "[s]omething uncanny is going to happen" when, through the peace of the sleeping nursery, passes "a quiver..., just sufficient to touch the night-lights"; the lights respond by "blink[ing] three times, one after the other and go[ing] out, precisely as children (whom familiarity has made them resemble) fall asleep" (1.1.316s.d.). As Barrie's stage directions go, these are in fairly straightforward relation to the

stage action; even the parenthetical aside which attributes mimetic performativity to the night-lights in fact translates into stage action that allows a watchful audience to recognize that parallel. This is a curious little twist on the kind of shifting adult-child role playing that will be seen throughout the text, since Mrs Darling departs with the impression that the night-lights are a disembodied extension of her own watchfulness; they prove instead to be infantilized imitators who have not only come to resemble their children, but extinguish themselves in a brief sequential mimetic melodrama: “Wendy’s light blinked and gave such a yawn that the other two yawned also, and before they could close their mouths all three went out” (88).

The Darlings’ nursery window is one of the great iconic literary images of the twentieth century, but its power depends upon its status as a feature of a stage set, or at least on some of the implications developed during its tenure as such. Like miniatures, tableaux, and windows as well in *Frankenstein*, Peter’s window represents a convergence of the domestic and the theatrical, and depends upon the question of framing, and therefore, of things within and outside of the frame. The window, with its curtain—or “the blind (which is what Peter would have called the theatre curtain if he had ever seen one” (87)—is a proscenium within the proscenium, and the consequent parallels allow the shadows of its other functions—serving as a divider between the adult and child worlds, and between safe domesticity and imaginative wilderness—to be cast back onto the nature of the theater as a genre, thereby cementing the integration of children and performance and characterizing both as otherworldly and powerful, out of the reach of adult agency. In the play’s initial extensive description of the nursery, the window is even given a bizarre sort of social and narrative agency, as it is “at present ever so staid and respectable, but half an hour hence (namely 6.30 p.m.) will be able to tell a very strange tale to the police” (88). That Peter uses the nursery window as entrance—and as exit, bringing the Darlings with him—

suggests a violation of domestic convention (particularly since, as Mrs Darling attests, it's three floors up) as well as a heightened awareness of theatrical effect.

Barrie's stage directions also speak to his evident awareness of the theatrical opportunities for visual representation of his ideas about imagination and the division of worlds. The theatrical scene of the Never Land begins in the dark, because "if you were to see the island bang (as Peter would say) the wonders of it might hurt your eyes"; instead there are at first some white dots visible, which turn out to be fairies, then the blinking of Peter's star (in interesting relation to the Darlings' night lights), trees, and shadows of beasts "out pictorially to greet Peter"; Hollindale calls this gradual revelation "the necessary stage effect of an imagined world stirring into life, as Peter and the children (and the audience) approach to quicken it (314n). The shadowy movement of the opening moments of this scene is a theatrical image for imagination's permitted usurpation of reality" (314n). This moment of arrival in *Peter and Wendy*, though given a similar distance through the children's aerial approach, does not have the same gradual effect of an awakened imagination. Just as Peter's arrival is in the novel a gradual and interiorized experience, suggested by his appearance in the children's minds, and the natural detritus he trails below the window, the reader here is prepared for the Never Land; it has already been introduced as equivalent with a person's mind and as mappable, and as the children near the island in flight, "a million golden arrows" point it out to them; they recognize it, "not as something long dreamt of and seen at last, but as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays" (105). Both Peter and his kingdom, in the novel, are features of a familiar interior landscape, and it is only in retrospect (an inherently mature perspective)—"[i]n the old days at home, . . . by bedtime"—that the threatening nature of the Never Land, with its "unexplored patches" and "black shadows mov[ing] about" is recognized (106). Barrie's prose

seems to struggle with its own tendency towards nostalgic distance, and the inevitable adulthood of that tone and perspective. In the theater, though, Barrie takes advantage of the realities of staging, and of the dramatic dependency upon the division between reality and imagination and performer and audience to shift the emphasis in his text towards a framework where the imaginative, because it is staged, *is* the real, and the child performers (the characters) have greater control over the spectacle.

We Are Doing An Act

Just as Barrie's narrative work in *The Little White Bird* demonstrates ongoing generic self-awareness—specifically as concerns David's collaboration—the Peter Pan story as a play is more explicit in its concern with questions of mimesis and performance, particularly as relate to children, and to that boundary between the adult and child worlds (or, in the context of the play, the social and the imaginative) and its reflection in the theatrical relation between representation and truth. This is often documented in Barrie's playscript in moments of self-conscious theatricality which call attention to themselves even more than they do in their other forms.

Barrie's stage directions—frequently unactable, often striking in their length and detail and oddity, and potentially interpretable as “a Trojan horse allowing covert reoccupation of the house of fiction” (Hollindale xvi)—reveal his sense of the navigation of genre boundaries as parallel to moving between the real and the imaginative, and the adult and the juvenile. When read, they are of course examples of the kind of dramatic self-awareness described above. Since the text is ostensibly a documentation of performance, though, and a guide for future productions, the precise function of these unconventional narrative interjections is harder to pin down. Hollindale takes issue with criticism of Barrie's published playtexts as “throwbacks to

novelization,” arguing instead (if somewhat grandiloquently) that the stage directions are not only “glories of his dramatic achievement, but an indispensable key to its true nature,” as well as being balanced by his comfort with other forms of non-verbal dramatic language (xvi).

Hollindale suggests that Barrie’s constant reworkings and generic recastings of bodies of material are evidence of a “theatrical imagination in constant and successful quest for dramatic equivalents of the novelist’s expressive freedoms” (xvii), and claims that the directions offer interpretive opportunities for actors, directors, and “reading theatergoers” alike (xvi). Certainly Barrie is not alone among his contemporaries; George Bernard Shaw’s stage directions are generally long and narrative. In Barrie’s case, though, they help navigate the transitions between genres and to highlight those aspects of his story which define it in any form. The stage directions also frequently bring attention the inherent theatricality of his material, seeming to entrust actors with the task of incorporating into their performances technically “unactable” directions.

As on the nineteenth-century stage, juvenile performance in *Peter Pan* frequently takes the form of the playing of adult roles. By allowing for explicit commentary on this activity within the generic framework of the drama (where it is more pronounced than in the other fictions), Barrie represents his child characters as critically mimetic, reproducing the kind of serious child’s play identified in the theories Satta and Corsaro; engaging in what Corsaro calls “interpretive reproduction,” children at play “continually elaborate and embellish adult models to address their own concerns,” (Satta 5) and in doing so, both construct their own unique culture, and actively contribute “to cultural production and change” (Corsaro 19). These concepts, derived from the study of “real children,” and applicable as well to this chapter’s earlier discussion of child actors “work[ing] hard at play” (Dowson), express how Barrie’s child

characters, and their performances, interactions, and generic reworkings, are encapsulations of the development of the mimetic child and its importance to literature. The imaginative and mimetic activity of children in the play operates on the level of independent development of imaginative spaces, since the Never Land is directly representative of the juvenile imagination, and also in specific instances of juvenile mimicry of subjects from the adult world in the form of role-play. All of this—perhaps most especially the attribution of seriousness and power to play as a juvenile imitative practice—is characteristic of the mimetic child as a literary figure.

Chapter One demonstrates the dramatic and literary efficacy which Shakespearean child characters derive from their mimetic tendencies, and these theatrical impulses are inherently tied to these other concepts of distinct worlds and the child's navigational facility. By operating on a separate plane to which adult characters have limited or no access, mimetic child characters exploit the liminal space between mimicry of reality, and the failure of that mimicry resulting from the self-consciousness of their literary role.

This juvenile role-playing, and the related historical questions about natural inclination, art and artlessness, and performance, posed above in relation to late nineteenth-century child actors, which will become fully realized in the drama are nonetheless already present in inchoate form in the earliest versions of the Peter Pan narrative. It is Mamie, for example—the proto-Wendy—who is “horrified” to inform Peter, in his Kensington Gardens isolation, that contrary to his own sense and hope, “all [his] ways of playing are quite, quite wrong, and not in the least like how boys play” (58). Having had “no one to tell him how children really play,” Peter is absurdly disillusioned by Mamie's revelation; when this critique brings Peter to a rare bout of tears, Mamie offers him a handkerchief, but realizing that he does not know what to do with it, she demonstrates, wiping her own eyes, then tells him “Now you do it”; “but instead of wiping his

own eyes he wiped hers” (58). Both of these moments, and the neat transition from one to the other, call upon the extant tradition of questioning the natural inclination of children to play, and render ironic the socialization and public display of child’s play. They also look ahead, though, to the exploratory performative work of the children in the stage version of *Peter Pan* who are constantly reenacting and thereby taking control of social situations and domestic niceties.

The conflicted representation of children which Gubar identifies throughout Barrie’s work is seen in *Peter Pan* in the undermining of the idea of the categories of child and adult as separate and stable through the repeated emphasis on “the knowingness of children and the ignorance of adults” (203). It is of particular importance that this “knowingness” frequently takes the form of skillful performance within an isolated imaginative space; “once in Neverland,” for example, “Wendy mothers the boys so successfully that her brothers forget their real parents, while Peter imitates the pirate captain ‘so perfectly that even the author has a dizzy feeling that at times he was really Hook’” (Gubar 203). These examples show singular mimetic performances by the story’s two primary juvenile protagonists, in imitation of its most prominent adult figures (especially given the echoes in Hook of Mr Darling), the serious consequences of which extend beyond the bounds of their private imaginative spaces, first back into the fictional domestic space of the nursery, and then even further outward, into Barrie’s bizarre meta-fictional realm where the author himself is disoriented and carried away by his own character’s mimetic capacity.

The story’s self-aware emphasis on mimetic and performative self-formation is only heightened in its shift to the stage, reflected in increased textual interrogations of theatricality, as well as in those staged moments which indicate possible revisions of earlier ideas, and origins of moments to come in Barrie’s prose resetting. The audience’s introduction to the interactions of

the elder Darling children take the form of a dramatic announcement, followed by the performance of an explicitly mimetic domestic scene:

John: (*histrionically*) We are doing an act; we are playing at being you and father. (*He imitates the only father who has come under his special notice*). A little less noise there.

Wendy: Now let us pretend we have a baby.

John: (*good-naturedly*) I am happy to inform you, Mrs Darling, that you are now a mother. (*Wendy gives way to ecstasy*) You have missed the chief thing; you haven't asked, 'boy or girl?'" (89)

In the play's opening moments, these children are already performing, following a script, and replicating in broad but accurate strokes the world which surrounds them. Hollindale makes note of this opening performance as an introduction to the play's "pattern of intricate role playing, especially the interchange of pretences between child and adult, adult and child" (312). But the child actors are also exhibiting signs of shrewd awareness of their own performativity—as demonstrated by John's histrionic assumption of the role of barker—as well as some of that innate cruelty identified by writers like Joanna Baillie, and tied up with performative impulses and consequent control of the division between the real and the imagined. Michael, the baby, requests validation of his very existence through inclusion in his siblings' play, saying, "(*expanding*) Now, John, have me"; when John replies in his mimicked father's voice, in contradiction of history and seemingly with no other impulse than fraternal cruelty, "we don't want any more," Michael is driven, "*contracting*," to an infantile existential crisis: "Am I not to be born at all?" (1.i.109-111). The ontology of this moment even extends, via possibly incorporable stage directions, into the physical body of the child, which expands and contracts in response to performance; this trope will recur in Act IV, when Wendy responds to Peter's

questioning the unsettling verisimilitude of their domestic performance by “*drooping*” (4.i.113). Though it comes from a child, Michael’s disoriented response suggests the mimetic power of the child actors’ rewriting of domestic history; it is the same kind of “knowingness” discussed above, with similarly dizzying consequences which here take the form of the effacing of Michael’s confidence in his own existence by the persuasive mimetic, yet independently creative, efforts of his brother.

However, this same scene in *Peter and Wendy* is portrayed as follows:

[Mrs Darling] had found her two older children playing at being herself and father on the occasion of Wendy’s birth, and John was saying: “I am happy to inform you, Mrs Darling, that you are now a mother,” in just such a tone as Mr Darling himself may have used on the real occasion. (80)

The novelistic demand for narrative perspective results in an apparently subtle but in fact very different impression of the scene of domestic performance. John’s advertisement is missing, and the scene is presented as one of adult discovery and conquest—she finds them, they are *her* children, it is she and her husband being represented, and she even offers her authoritative assessment of the tone of the performance. On stage, it is the audience who discovers the children at imitative play, recognizes the objects of imitation, and absorbs the independent nature of their performance which, existing within the confines of another performance, seems even more self-aware, and casts children as in control of the story’s imaginative spaces. Also, though it includes the exchange between John and Michael and the distress of the latter, Michael’s question “Am I not to be born at all?” is omitted; instead, the moment at which Mrs Darling intervenes with the authority of the adult and of family history to assert that she does indeed want another boy, represented in the play simply as “*Triumph of Michael*,” is translated through

this same dominant maternal lens: Michael “had leapt into her arms. Such a little thing...to recall now, but not so little if that was to be Michael’s last night in the nursery (80). Here too, as in the initial presentation of the scene by Mrs Darling, and also in the earlier cited depiction of the Never Land, the rawness of juvenile performative power—as in John’s heartless recreation of his father, or Peter’s sudden and unexpected entrance through the window—is subdued by the adult narrative filter. This comparison suggests that it is in the theater that Barrie sees children as able to maintain control over their own stories, which is always why theatricality is for him a significant motif across genres. The comments on children’s agency inherent in Barrie’s genre work are ironically in direct response to Rose’s critiques, since the dramatic text offers a space of juvenile narrative independence which is necessarily complicated in the novel form.

The choice of subject matter for the performance is also of particular interest in this story, and in the context of my argument. Not only are Wendy and John imitating their parents, and their respective signature attitudes of maternal delight and acceptance, and “a little less noise there,” already locating their performative explorations in the domestic, they have selected as their scene for reenactment that of their own births. In doing so, and in announcing it as a performance, and eliminating their younger sibling in the reenactment, the child actors begin to take independent and performative ownership of their own identities and creative capacities.

This reclaiming or reexamination of the trappings of domestic life through mimetic play recurs throughout the text, accompanying the children into the wilds of the Never Land. The crux of this thematic is the scene at the beginning of Act 4, “The Home Under the Ground,” in which the stage family comprised of parents Peter and Wendy, and children John, Michael, and the lost boys gather together for a “pretend meal” (4.i.46). Where the Darlings’ nursery is three floors up, the Never Land’s domestic space is under the ground, and the stage directions indicate that the

audience can see the wood above the ground simultaneously (yet another division, here somehow visualized as stage set). Wendy has clothed herself for the occasion in “romantic woodland garments,” and the children in “picturesque attire” (4.i.37, 40), and they await the arrival of their father (Peter), who is not, as John insubordinately attests, *really* their father; he “did not even know how to be a father till” John showed him (4.i.65).

When Peter does arrive at last, he asserts his own imaginative authority, using it as fuel for his adult role-playing, as he scatters “*pretend nuts among* [his gathered pretend children] *and watches sharply to see that they crunch with relish*” (4.i.98-99). This sharp parental surveillance is at once an echo of the play’s opening reversal in which the children see to Mr Darling’s consumption of his medicine, and is also Peter maintaining the Never Land’s standard of make-believe as truth. He is even able to echo both Mr Darling and the performance of him by John in the reiteration of “[a] little less noise there” (4.i.162). Peter, like Barrie and his genre flexibility, “is peculiarly able to keep switching sides,” presenting adulthood from the perspective of the child, and vice versa. (Hollindale 318). But he is also discomfited, perhaps because of his history with Wendy, by the possibility of play shifting without his secure knowledge into truth. Scared, he asks Wendy (as a child might ask his mother anxiously about a bad dream), “[i]t is only pretend, isn’t it, that I am their father?” (4.i.112). Despite her own hurt feelings at Peter’s hesitation to submit to an imagined life with her, “*drooping*,” she continues to be play the good wife and mother by reassuring him that yes, it is only pretend. She can’t help qualifying her statement, though, by reminding Peter that all the children are nonetheless theirs; still uncertain, and “*determined to get at facts, the only things that puzzle him*) he asks, “But not really?” (4.i.113-7).

Hollindale distinguishes between the child's play of Wendy, who is controlled in part by "the incipient adult" within her, and of Peter, in whom the "child is inviolable, separate, free. For Peter being 'father' is fun only if he knows that it is not and will not be true" (xiv). And yet—it is Wendy who is comfortable using mimetic play not only to replicate familiar domesticity, but also to achieve her own personal desires. Like John rewriting the Darling genealogy to exclude his whiny little brother, Wendy is taking ownership of adult social modes through youthful performativity and using them to write her own story. It is a perfect convergence of Corsaro's view of children embellishing adult models to address their own concerns, and Gubar's suggestion of children as artful collaborators capable of reshaping stories. It is certainly true that Wendy's imaginative fantasies are shaped by her social milieu, but it is also true that they revolve around confident if nascent sexuality, and the fruits of female productivity. Through her imaginative labors, Wendy delivers herself a family of eight sons where before there were only two brothers.

It is unsurprising, then, that like *Frankenstein's* domestic ruptures leading to the invigorated and multi-layered telling of tales, Wendy's dissatisfaction with Peter's ability to accept their play as truth as far as their romantic connection is concerned is immediately channeled into the act of telling a bedtime story, placing herself back in a position of creative authority whose familiarity affirms the authenticity of the assumed roles of her "children." Her subject is yet another performative juvenile reiteration of the family legacy—the tale of Mr and Mrs Darling, and their "three descendents"; when she arrives at the part about the children having flown away, and asks her audience to "[t]hink, oh think, of the empty beds," the stage direction notes that "*the heartless ones*" do so "with glee" (4.i.166-7). Hollindale argues that this "amused truthfulness" is a reflection of an "endemic neutrality of stance towards childhood and

adulthood” (319). This assessment, though, fails to recognize the text’s evident discomfort with this infantile imaginative ruthlessness, and with the whole situation of Wendy’s performance as well. Though possibly truthful, the image of a heartless child finding glee in the idea of abandoned parents is no less unsettling, and in this case is rooted in the independent and unregulateable interpretation of the story being told. Further, Wendy is using her own story of leaving her parents at home (and in *Peter Pan*, unlike many stories where children venture off to fantastical lands, the children are actually absent and missed, even if the parents’ grief does take the form of farcical melodrama)—as creative capital in her mimetic effort to form a family in the Never Land with her and Peter at the center. Barrie’s position on both childhood and adulthood is far from neutral; ambivalence in fact indicates conflicting strong feelings, and it is this kind of tension which defines the complexity of Barrie’s work and places it in direct conversation with the Victorian debates about child actors, and in its place at the culmination of this work’s arguments about the figure of the mimetic child.

If We Shadows Have Offended

In drawing this discussion of the Peter Pan narrative to a close, and wrapping up in doing so consideration of the mimetic child as a literary figure the importance of which begins to affect actual children, this chapter also shuts the door at last on the long nineteenth century. It seems worth noting in closing, then, given this work’s opening and trajectory, Barrie’s evident and widespread (if infrequently explicit) awareness of and proud indebtedness to Shakespeare and his works. R. D. S. Jack summarizes the range of this influence: “Barrie was to write versions of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Macbeth*; to use Shakespearean character names and a performance of *As You Like It* in *Rosalind*; to make his own contribution to the Bacon debate and, of course, to

employ echoes of Shakespearean drama in many of his major plays” (46). It is these echoes, specifically in the case of *Peter Pan*, which I would like to consider in closing. The play aligns with the works of Shakespeare—*The Tempest* most directly, but also *The Winter’s Tale*, among others—as well as being more broadly demonstrative of Shakespearean sensibilities, and in doing so, argues for the ongoing presence of Shakespeare in potentially controversial representations of children which depend upon performativity and the imagination, and relies upon the cultural and theatrical dominance of Shakespeare as a national patriarch to foreground arguments about the division between children and adults. There is also a deeper kinship between Shakespeare and *Peter Pan*, as concerns the mimetic child and all its related anxieties, in the profound integration in both of education, parent-child dynamics, language, and performance.

The structure of *Peter Pan*, like others of Barrie’s stage plays, adopts “the circular form of the Shakespearean Romance” by opening with a domestic scene, moving into fantasy, and then returning to the domestic (Jack 85). In Barrie as in Shakespeare, however, this is not a simple stock formula, but in fact a formal embodiment of important thematic ideas about the relations between the imaginative and the real, the natural and the social, and often, the young and the old. There is another play which begins with children safe in their nursery who are then cast out, due to their father’s pride, into the undiscovered countries of a pastoral realm of performance and make-believe, and of death—an awfully big adventure. This is, of course, *The Winter’s Tale*, and it shares with *Peter Pan* not only this structure, but also the figure of the mimetic child traced in Mamillius in Chapter One, and the extensive thematics of lost children (the ingénue is Perdita, cast away to the pastoral kingdom of Bohemia) and lost youth. Though Peter will not grow old, Barrie’s sentiment that “we can still hear the sound of the surf” on the

shores of the Never Land, “though we shall land no more” infuses the work with a wistfulness which makes childhood nostalgic even as it is being performed. This process is evident in *The Winter’s Tale* too, as Leontes reflects idyllically upon his “unfledged days” and says upon seeing Mamillius, “methought I did recoil / Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreeched (1.ii.153-55).

Even in something like the fixation on birds, especially in the earliest versions of the Peter Pan narrative, but which remains in vestigial form in *Peter Pan* in the motifs of flight, crowing, the Never Bird, and elsewhere, is a faint but nonetheless resonant echo of Shakespeare and his use of avian imagery of *Macbeth*, discussed in Chapter One. Faced with parental abandonment, young MacDuff proposes the natural and mimetic plan of living “as birds do,” which is Peter’s exact history (with yet another parent/child reversal in his being the initial abandoner; eventually, though, his mother will move on to a new boy, leaving him to return to the birds). While this is a potentially superficial or incidental connection, Barrie’s interest (as a Scotsman, perhaps) in *Macbeth*, which takes the form of both adaptation and allusion in his own works, coincides here with the rising tide of structural and thematic parallels which will culminate in direct textual references in Hook’s already Shakespearean closing soliloquy.

Despite the compelling structural and thematic parallels with *The Winter’s Tale*, *The Tempest* is *Peter Pan*’s closest Shakespearean kin. Jack’s argument highlights the many parallels between the two plays, including the exposition of “youth and intellect” to the “compromising and corrupting effects of real power,” and “the practical problems of colonization [the invasion, disruption, and desertion of a primitive land] set against the grand ideas of innocence, mercy, and justice” (230). These same issues have been associated with the figure of the mimetic child, whose imitative and performative nature questions extant power dynamics, and is even reflected

in the discourse of colonialism (as seen in my third chapter). One of the most obvious similarities between *The Tempest* and *Peter Pan* (and one of the most important links between the questions of power and colonization identified by Jack above) is the use of the island as both setting and metaphor. The island is of course a popular trope in the Western tradition (and elsewhere) from Donne to *Lost*, and frequently demarcates the relationship between the real and the imaginary, often in response to particular social and cultural histories and situations. That *Peter Pan* should like *The Tempest* be set on an island is not a simple coincidence of literary tradition, but in fact the first of many evident and increasingly integral parallels between the two plays. Barrie once wrote that “[t]o be born is to be wrecked on an island,”⁷¹ an image which suggests both his melancholy yet bleakly hopeful worldview, and the importance of his conception of the Never Land as an island. In *Peter and Wendy*, Barrie transitions seamlessly from his discussion of maps of minds, where he explains that trying to draw “a map of child’s mind” is especially difficult, since they are “not only confused, but keep going round all the time,” and his designation of this same space (the child’s mind) as “the Neverland, [which] is always more or less an island” (73). The Never Land as a scenic location, therefore, as characterized above, is at once a fantastical kingdom with all kinds of adventures “nicely crammed” in (*Barrie Wendy* 74), an actualization of a child’s imagination, and part and parcel of the petty pace of daily life. Even the map of the child’s mind described by Barrie and discussed above documents both “coral reefs and rakish looking craft...and princes with six elder brothers,” and “first day at school” and “getting into braces” (74). Kavey writes that like children’s minds, “an island cannot be breached without alerting the natives, and any attempt would broadcast the prospect of invasion. Adults cannot trespass into children’s minds without getting caught” (95-96).

⁷¹ From the preface to R. M. Ballantune’s *The Coral Island*, qtd. in Hollindale

Kavey's and Jack's use of colonial language suggests at once the alignment of the two plays and the potential obstruction of Prospero's dominant patriarchal and artistic central presence to the parallelism of the comparison. Prospero does ultimately surrender his power, allowing the fruits of Miranda's independent (at least, from her perspective) performance in joining with Ferdinand to assume narrative control and to carry them away from the imaginative space of the island. But Barrie's representation of Peter, and the question of where Prospero resurfaces in *Peter Pan* are indications of the ways in which Barrie incorporates Shakespearean allusions and sensibilities into his works in order to complicate ideas already present therein about imagination and the child figure. While "the bard figure rules Shakespeare's Island," Jack writes, "Peter as stage-director controls Barrie's Never Land" (Jack 232).

Thus Peter can be seen as embodying in his artistic hegemony many of Prospero's characteristics, and in doing so, reclaiming for the youth camp the controlling energies of adult and parenthood. Curiously, though, Peter is *also* a close parallel with Prospero's two "unnatural children." In his potential monstrosity by virtue of his performative nature and his capacity for cruelty, and in his status as child of nature," Peter finds a strange bedfellow in the savage Caliban. Jack connects the two via his arguments about the evolutionary development of language and coding, and notes that both Caliban and Peter have "come to speak in words but [are] uniquely defined by [their] power over the less precise and more mystic language of music, which can suggest either divinity or savagery, depending on the perspective" (230). Ariel is Peter's clearest parallel in *The Tempest* (though considering Shakespeare more broadly, he certainly owes a debt to Puck), and their most important commonality is the taunting of opponents by performative and mimetic means, disrupting action and relationships by imitating voices or sounds while simultaneously creating a spectacle for the audience.

As his questioning of Wendy in the middle of their domestic performance suggests, Peter, like his shifting genres, is apparently flexible but in fact anxious about his role as skilled pretender and its relation to reality (which is for him mostly pretend); the text repeatedly reflects this anxiety, especially in some of the play's more fraught and confused statements on Peter's relations between the real and the imaginary. He is described, for example, as "*so good at pretend that he feels the pain*" of his imaginary wound, and of course, he proclaims that "[t]o die will be an awfully big adventure" (3.i.163-4, 180). Finally, when Peter resists adoption in Act V, he tells Mrs Darling passionately, "I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things. No one is going to catch me, lady, and make me a man. I want always to be a little boy and to have fun" (5.2.133). This statement—I won't grow up—has become the ubiquitous battle cry of Peter Pan in the cultural imagination; what is less well known, though, is Barrie's qualification in the stage direction: "*So perhaps he thinks, but it is only his greatest pretend*" (151). Each of these quotations demonstrates Peter's conviction, skill, and success as an imaginative performer, but then immediately qualifies that praise by pairing his mimetic ability with serious adult themes like pain and death, and ultimately undermines Peter's self-definition by identifying it as, unbeknownst to him, pretend. This is the kind of adult narrative mediation that troubles critics like Rose. In the drama, though, Peter's great pretend is unqualified, and remains great; the audience, children and adults alike, believes it just like they believe in fairies—and will clap every time to prove it, making drama happen with a childlike perspective—and Peter remains in complete control of the dramatic narrative, ending the play by taking up his signature pipes and "play[ing] on and on till we wake up" (5.2.14).

Thus Peter, in his iconic status, his Shakespearean associations, and his performative exploration of the relationships between the real and the imagined, and therefore of adults and

children, represents a literary figure whose outward expansion first to the stage and then into the greater cultural imagination mirrors the development and importance of the mimetic child and operates on a shared set of characteristics. But just as Caliban and Prospero are dependent upon one another for defining the finer points of their characters (“this thing of darkness I acknowledge mine”) and just as the Never Land needs the specific realities of London and the Darling nursery to function as it, and as mimetic children more broadly find a counterpart in performing parents, Peter would not function as he does in his narrative, in this argument, or in his contemporary legacy without his archenemy, the “cadaverous and blackavised” Captain James Hook (2.1.76-7). It is also the figure of Hook, and the specific characterization of his epic opposition with Peter that Barrie’s Shakespearean associations become both most apparent and most relevant to the argument about the mimetic child at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Where Hook may seem (especially in modern adaptations) like a straightforward caricature of robust villainy, he is in fact a curious combination of imminently adult in his reminiscence of Mr Darling and his general sense of tyrannical patriarchal authority, and childlike in his commitment to engagement with Peter within the imaginative framework of the Never Land. His role as a representation of (albeit ridiculous) adult authority is reflected in the traditional theatrical practice of casting the same actor to play both Hook and Mr Darling, originated in the 1904 production, when the actor (Gerald du Maurier) playing Mr Darling requested the role of Hook as well, resulting in a doubling “which has had an important impact on contemporary readings of the play” (Kavey 110).⁷² Holmes reads Mr Darling as “Hook’s alter ego and a poster child for Judith Butler’s theories of the performance of gender” (141), while

⁷² Curiously, Barrie’s original intention was for the actress playing Mrs Darling to double as Hook, established in an early version of the play entitled “The Boy Who Hates Mothers” (Kavey 110).

Susan Ohmer notes that the doubling has been seen as “deliberately undermining the idea of the patriarch” (Ohmer 173). In addition to these various dynamic readings of the Hook/Mr Darling doubling, though, the clear parallels that Barrie draws between Hook and Peter himself must be addressed; we are told, and the scene in which Peter like Puck or Ariel misleads the pirates by commanding them in the voice of their captain to release Tiger Lily verifies, that Peter is capable of imitating Hook, as quoted above, “so perfectly that even the author has a dizzy feeling that at times he was really Hook” (3.1.49). Not only are characters entwined by this mimetic relationship, but the text presents “a series of opportunities for their kinship to be powerfully suggested on the stage” (Hollindale 317n50). Chapter Three addresses the very common motif of doubling in the nineteenth-century novel, and the particular pairing of Peter and Hook, like that of the creature and Victor, calls attention to the work’s emphasis on the mimetic dynamics of adult/child relations.

He is at once Peter’s great enemy and his most steadfast accomplice in his ongoing quest for ceaseless imaginative play. Further, he is explicitly troubled by the importance of mimesis and juvenile imaginative play: “I am told they play at Peter Pan, and that the strongest always chooses to be Peter....they force the baby to be Hook. The baby! That is where the canker gnaws” (Barrie 5.1.46-49). That Hook expresses this agonized awareness of the importance of imitative performance, even invoking a hierarchy of child actors, is evidence of his complete investment in the play’s mimetic value system and his importance as a supporting performer to Peter’s mimetic child. Hook’s frustration here recalls Bram Stoker’s image, discussed at the end of my previous chapter, of children translating a threatening presence into “gala-time” through performative play; the realization his own inefficacy is only possible because he is an ostensible adult who is also acutely aware of the very serious tendencies of performing children to isolate

and adopt as models for imitation, and thereby disarm through mimetic replication and embellishment, those aspects of the world around them which are most menacing.

It is also significant that Hook's language in his lament evokes Shakespeare's; "that is where the canker gnaws" recalls both "ay, there's the rub," and the frequent references in other plays to images of cankers, gnawing, and various modes of botanical decomposition. In general, Hook is *Peter Pan*'s most Shakespearean character, displaying at once ridiculous pomposity, serious menace, and artful philosophizing. His reflections on death which open Act V are Shakespearean in their form, content, and frequently in style, and his final line builds upon the general echoes in the "canker" passage to include two direct allusions: "Back, you pewling spawn!" he shouts at his own child prisoners: "I'll show you now the road to dusty death!" (5.1.206-7). The use of "pewling" here to describe children, particularly with this spelling and the proximity of other Shakespearean references, recollects the description of the infant "mewling and puking in its nurse's arms" which characterizes the first of the seven ages of man in *As You Like It*'s famous "All the world's a stage" passage, while "the road to dusty death" is, of course, a paraphrase of lines from Macbeth's "tomorrow" soliloquy. In the midst of the heroic climax of a child's adventure story, potentially cartoonish and pure with youthful triumph, Barrie plants explicit links to two of Shakespeare's most famous philosophical expressions of nostalgia, and of despair and the hopelessness not only of death but of daily life, "to the last syllable of recorded time" (5.v.21). Both are also instances of Shakespeare's beloved *theatrum mundi* motif, in which the duration of a life is man's "hour upon the stage" (25). That the soliloquy goes on to identify life as a "brief candle" and "but a walking shadow" (23-24) is especially resonant in a play which begins with a boy (who is "always the same age" and "*still has all his baby teeth*") (Barrie *Little 12*, *Peter* 3.148) entering a nursery to reclaim his severed shadow—"a flimsy thing,

which is not more material than a puff of smoke” (Barrie 1.1.178). Hook thus concentrates the play’s Shakespearean sensibilities into one villainous, impassioned, yet totally impotent threat, and infuses the moment of his defeat with the weight not only of Shakespearean authority, but of “all our yesterdays.” The moment of Hook’s death, then, is yet another expression of the ambivalence of Barrie’s narrative instability and reliance on theatricality, paralleling that which characterizes responses to the mimetic child and to theater. It is at once a defeat of tyrannical adult authority (including Shakespeare’s literary dominance), and a celebration of imaginative performance in the carrying out of the scripted and inevitable triumph of Peter Pan and Hook’s absolute willingness to play his part in that juvenile imaginative fantasy, and to use Shakespeare for all he’s worth to do so.

That the closure of Hook’s tenure as Peter’s performative nemesis (and his life) ends with two explicit allusions is an effort by Barrie to make the extent of his Shakespearean influence evident to his audience that they may recognize its more thorough integration throughout the play. Rose and others would perhaps argue that this is one of those discomfitingly adult moments in an ostensibly juvenile work, but what is more important even than what any audience might interpret (since it is certain that many adults would not immediately recognize these quotations, especially upon hearing them in the theater), is the fact that Barrie felt it necessary to call attention to Shakespeare at this particular moment in the dramatic narrative and thereby highlight resonances with other earlier associations in the play, like the connection of setting and character to those in *The Tempest*. It is especially important that these lines come from Hook since, as discussed above, he mirrors Peter in his shifting presentations of adulthood from the perspective of the child, and children from an adult’s viewpoint, because of his simultaneous status as adult and as childlike player (318).

As the analysis above of the use of allusion argues, the moment of Hook's death signifies a culmination of both Barrie's deliberate and systematic use of Shakespeare, and this chapter's arguments about the figure of the mimetic child as it begins to coincide with real child performers. The fascinating theatrical moment which follows Hook's death situates these same ideas in the performative space outside of the story itself, affirming the inherent theatricality of the story and Barrie's conflicted representation of the child. After Hook is driven by Peter's casual invincibility into the jaws of the waiting crocodile, the curtain falls, only to rise again on a tableau of Peter posing as Napoleon (in specific imitation of a famous painting by Orchardson; the throne of truth is now only a distant memory). This tableau sequence was included in the original production, and retained in performance and preserved in the playscript, despite critical dislike. The presence of the tableau, Barrie's insistence upon it as a stage feature, and the stage directions' warning that the curtain must not rise again "lest we see [Peter] on the poop in Hook's hat and cigars, and with a small iron claw" (5.2.226-8) are a kind of symphonic demonstration of Barrie's transmutation of the mimetic child. He emphasizes the division between spectator and actor (in this case child actor), and suggests that there is a scene which occurs regardless of the audience's gaze, and the scene is one of juvenile mimetic performance, with the boy who won't grow up assuming the stage business of being his own adult nemesis.

Think But This (Conclusion)

There are many reasons why western culture can't shake Shakespeare, and why he and his works have been and continue to be a forceful global presence as well. There are also many reasons why representations of childhood maintain what Alan Richardson identifies as a "central position [in] the Western cultural tradition" (9). This dissertation asserts that these tenacities are interrelated in important ways which are documented in works as early as Plato's *Republic* and which affect literary composition, education, parenting, and social regulation of children into the twentieth century. The association is grounded in an evident imitative performativity which characterizes Shakespeare's works, including his child characters, and his own persona, and which extends into nineteenth-century representations of the child.

By tracing this mimetic child figure from Shakespearean characters, through the association of Shakespeare himself with the child figure, into adaptations of his works for children, then through the nineteenth-century novel, and finally into the generically unstable Peter Pan narratives and the contemporaneous debates about child actors, it is possible to recognize the larger influence of the performative agency of the child. The child figure asserts itself as a literary presence, and in doing so acknowledges the very real influence of children—mankind in its phenomenal unknowable irretrievable infancy—on the production of both texts and culture. The study of the mimetic child, then, becomes a larger scale consideration of the process of artistic production as expressive of parent-child relations, and of the state of mimetic representation at the turn of the twentieth century. Even as artists and writers strive to "hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature," they are continually "mock'd by art" in its juvenile tendency to combine imitation and innovation, both reflecting and creating its surrounding worlds.

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Comparing what we're looking for misses the point. It's wanting to know that makes us matter. Otherwise we're going out the way we came in. That's why you can't believe in the afterlife...[b]elieve in the after, by all means, but not the life. Believe in God, the soul, the spirit, the infinite, believe in angels if you like, but not in the great celestial get-together for an exchange of views. If the answers are in the back of the book I can wait, but what a drag. Better to struggle on knowing that failure is final.

-Hannah Jarvis, *Arcadia* (Tom Stoppard)