

“Time runs on, and I with it”: Age, Gender, and the Production of Elizabethan

Monarchical Power

by

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*For my mom,  
who is shifting the basis of her power.*



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## Abstract

Historians revere Elizabeth I as a monarch who wielded an enormous amount of power despite the negative ways in which female rule was perceived by early modern people. As she got older, however, her age replaced her gender as the dominant threat to her image of authority. In this thesis, I will explore how Elizabeth I negotiated the changing natures of power and weakness that accompanied her entrance into old age, in order to theorize the relations among age, gender, power, and subversion in early modern England. I will do so by reading Elizabeth in relation to representations of age and power in Shakespeare's history plays, arguing that a comparison between Elizabeth and King Henry V illuminates the ways in which the age forced Elizabeth to change her strategy for the production of power.

The introduction positions this project amidst previous work linking Elizabeth I to Shakespeare's plays, as well as in relation to Greenblatt's theory of the circulation of social energy and his theory of subversion and containment. Chapter one explores the ways in which the young Elizabeth I infused feminine imagery with power in her public speech, transforming the potentially dangerous force of her gender into a powerful image of hybrid feminine authority. Chapter two argues that the young Elizabeth I's way of crafting her power was similar to that of Shakespeare's Henry V (Hal): they both carefully manipulated the potentially damaging elements of their personas in order to control how others viewed them. Like Elizabeth, Hal produces his power in *1 Henry IV* by calling upon a dangerous force (delinquency) and infusing it with monarchical power in order to prompt others to recognize his authority. Chapter three analyzes the relationship among power, age, and delinquency in *2 Henry IV*, arguing that Hal is able to produce power based on delinquency because of his youth. Shakespeare constantly relegates both debauchery and authority to the realm of the young, and he presents power as fundamentally youthful by presenting Hal's impending rule as a rejuvenating antidote to the aged impotence plaguing the country's power structures. Chapter four examines the ways in which the perceptions of age and gender described in chapter three made it necessary for Elizabeth to shift her strategy away from the manipulation of "youthful" feminine roles and toward a power based on aged authority. By placing acknowledgements of her many years as queen alongside assertions of the loyalty and love she had earned from her people, she prompted her subjects to think of her power as intertwined with her age.

The relationship between gender, age, and power is dynamic not only for Elizabeth and Henry V, but for all rulers—dramatic, historical, and contemporary. Old age has always been perceived differently in women than in men, and it is important to think about the ways in which powerful women find ways to embrace the aging process rather than let it detract from their authority.

**Keywords:** power, age, gender, subversion, early modern



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*Wedding Dance in the Open Air* by Pieter Brueghel the Younger, 42



### Introduction

*Then [Sir Robert Cecil] told her how, to content the people, her Majesty must go to bed. To which she smiled, wonderfully contemning him, saying that the word “must” was not to be used to princes. Thereupon said, “Little man, little man, if your father had lived, ye durst not have said so much. But thou knowest I must die and that maketh thee so presumptuous.” And presently commanding him and the rest to depart her chamber, willing [Charles Howard, Earl of Nottingham] to stay, to whom she shook her head and with a pitiful voice said, “My Lord, I am tied with a chain of iron about my neck.”*

—Elizabeth Southwell, “A True Relation of What Succeeded at the Sickness and Death of Queen Elizabeth” (1607)<sup>1</sup>

Lying on a pile of cushions laid out on the floor by servants, the sixty-nine-year-old Queen Elizabeth I was nearing death. She was too weak to stand, and yet she refused to go to bed. Her former fire was diminishing: she was nervous and irritable, dwelling constantly on unpleasant memories.<sup>2</sup> She had stopped eating, bathing, undressing, and sleeping—and yet she had not stopped establishing her authority. Her quibbling over Secretary of State Sir Robert Cecil’s use of the word “must” demonstrates that even on her deathbed, she refused to let her courtiers control her as they would an ailing mother or grandmother. Although she often took on roles that the average early modern Englishwoman was expected to inhabit during her lifetime, Elizabeth was no average woman. She was a queen, and her power depended on making this clear even at moments when her weaknesses were most evident. In fact, the potent combination of weakness and strength was what made her reign so successful: she was able to incorporate

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<sup>1</sup> Donald V. Stump and Susan M. Felch, eds., *Elizabeth I and Her Age: Authoritative Texts, Commentary, and Criticism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 525.

<sup>2</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 516.

potentially disadvantageous elements of her persona into her rule by infusing them with power. It is easy to see Elizabeth doing this in the passage above. She was in an extremely vulnerable position at the time of her death, but she was still able to demand complete obedience from her courtiers.

As firm as Elizabeth's grasp on power seems to be in this passage, it is impossible for her to ignore the fact that she is—to put it simply—extremely old. Once Cecil and the other courtiers have been dismissed, she quietly confides to the Earl of Nottingham that she is “tied with a chain of iron about [her] neck,” a statement that contrasts sharply with the chiding tone of her admonishment of Cecil. What was this “chain of iron” that so weakened Elizabeth in her final days? Tudor rulers often wore necklaces or chains that represented their royal power, but Elizabeth's use of the word “tied” and the suggestion that she spoke this phrase in a “pitiful voice” indicate that the “chain of iron” representing her rule had become restrictive. Elizabeth's body undoubtedly deteriorated as she aged (although her health remained relatively sound until her death<sup>3</sup>), but there were other age-related factors at work that curtailed her ability to assert her power: mental weariness, for instance, and the public's highly gendered perceptions of their elderly queen. Despite the savvy with which Elizabeth produced her power throughout her reign, it was inevitable that aging would challenge her ability to establish her authority, making the iron chain of her rule more difficult to bear. No incident demonstrates this better than the Essex affair, in which Elizabeth's fiery young favorite Robert Devereaux, the Earl of Essex, was able to repeatedly disobey the aged queen's direct orders while leading her Irish campaign and then return home to lead an open (but unsuccessful) rebellion against her.

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Martin, *Constituting Old Age in Early Modern English Literature from Queen Elizabeth to King Lear*, Massachusetts Studies in Early Modern Culture (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 62.

In this thesis, I will explore how Elizabeth I negotiated the changing natures of power and weakness that accompanied her entrance into old age, in order to theorize the relations among age, gender, and power in early modern England. I will do so by reading Elizabeth in relation to representations of age and power in Shakespeare's history plays, arguing that a comparison between Elizabeth and King Henry V illuminates the ways in which early modern intersections of age and gender prompted Elizabeth to alter her strategy for the production of power as she got older. When scholarly comparisons are made between Elizabeth I and Shakespeare's dramatic depictions of historical monarchs, they overwhelmingly focus on Richard II. This is because Essex's followers paid the Lord Chamberlain's Men to have Shakespeare's *Richard II*, a play in which a legitimate monarch is deposed, staged in advance of Essex's rebellious march on London in 1601. When she received news of this, Elizabeth famously replied "I am Richard the Second, know ye not that?"<sup>4</sup> This is admittedly fascinating, and there are plenty of parallels between the historical Richard II and Elizabeth to justify comparisons between the two rulers,<sup>5</sup> but Richard II's age is not foregrounded strongly enough to merit an age-based comparison with Elizabeth. There is, however, another comparison that can perhaps bring more nuance to our understanding of the queen: that of Elizabeth with Shakespeare's King Henry V. In some ways, comparing Hal to Elizabeth seems relatively obvious; after all, Elizabeth was queen when the second tetralogy was written, so it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that they share some characteristics. If the comparison is to be taken further, however, it is necessary to consider the specific ways in which each figure constructs his or her power.

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<sup>4</sup> James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2005), 136.

<sup>5</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 136-8.

My ideas on the construction of power build upon Stephen Greenblatt's influential theory of subversion and containment. In his 1988 essay "Invisible Bullets," Greenblatt uses Thomas Harriot's *A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia* (1588) to propose the idea that colonial authorities strengthened their religious hold on the Algonquian tribe by testing out the dangerously subversive theory that religion is primarily a mode of social control; thus, the undermining of Christian order is the positive condition for the establishment of that order.<sup>6</sup> Greenblatt sets out testing, recording, and explaining as the three primary vehicles for this process of subversion and containment, and he argues that they are each present in Shakespeare's history plays. In *I Henry IV*, for example, the image of power that Hal produces depends on the production and containment of his subversive association with his tavern friends.

This thesis, though, modifies Greenblatt's theory: my work makes clear the fact that while the use of "subversion" was indeed a common mode of Renaissance power production, the ways in which that subversion was used vary greatly. Subversion was sometimes "contained," as Greenblatt argues, but it was just as often manipulated, built upon, or molded into something new and different. In other words, there are many ways of producing authority out of subversion. The reader might be tempted to ask what exactly is being subverted in Greenblatt's theory—this is a question that Greenblatt addresses only tacitly. In this thesis, I understand "subversion" to mean any quality, characteristic, way of acting, way of thinking, or way of being that undermines or challenges a power structure. Subversion can occur on multiple levels simultaneously: Hal's participation in the world of Eastcheap, for example, is subversive both to societal expectations (a prince should not be drinking in a tavern with peasants) and to his own nascent monarchical

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 30.

power (no one will take a hard-drinking, tavern-brawling king seriously). Thus, it is the beliefs, expectations, and desires of both powerful individuals and their societies that are being subverted when I refer to “subversion” in this thesis. While behaviors that would have been dubbed “subversive” by early modern people often coincide with things that many of us would think of as empowering today (femininity, for example), it is important to note that subversion in this context is not inherently positive—what is being subverted is not always an oppressive structure. Hal’s frequent ventures into criminality are useful examples of this.

Elizabeth and Hal both call upon characteristics that are potentially damaging to their rule in the process of producing their power: Hal uses delinquency (a quality unacceptable in the court world to which the play suggests he belongs), and Elizabeth invokes femininity (an attribute many early modern people considered distasteful in a ruler). But Elizabeth’s femininity and Hal’s delinquency are not both forms of subversion in the classic sense. The word “subversion” implies agency and intention; someone has to produce it. As Greenblatt argues, Hal’s delinquency is clearly subversive: Hal consciously chooses to participate in tavern culture. Elizabeth, however, did not choose to be a woman. Both delinquency and femininity are qualities that would hinder an early modern monarch’s ability to produce power, but the former is intentional, while the latter is inherent. With this difference in mind, I will refer to Hal’s delinquency as a subversive force, while referring to Elizabeth’s femininity as simply a dangerous or disadvantageous one. I occasionally use the word “subversion” when referring to both delinquency and femininity at the same time for convenience’s sake, but the reader should keep in mind the differences between potential subversion and potential weakness.

That being said, I encourage the reader to think of femininity and delinquency as parallel forces that are manipulated in similar ways by Elizabeth and Hal. Both monarchs control these potential weaknesses by infusing them with authority, producing hybrid images of power that are more easily controlled than pure subversion. While each monarch ultimately uses his or her new hybrid subversion in a different way (Hal's power is produced in the rejection of his delinquency, while Elizabeth is able to base her queenship on her power-infused femininity—and on the aged authority she begins to create as she grows older), both Hal and Elizabeth produce power using potentially dangerous forces, and these forces are not always fully contained in the way that Greenblatt describes. They are manipulated and united with power so that they can be used to build and sustain monarchical rule. This thesis is as much about the different ways in which power is produced as it is about the ways that age can affect that process.

It is necessary to note that while I compare Hal to Elizabeth (and, by extension, Falstaff to Essex) in the chapters that follow, I do not mean to say that Shakespeare fashioned his characters to be exact (or even recognizable) representations of real-life figures. I will demonstrate that Hal and Elizabeth produced their power using similar mechanisms, and I will argue that Falstaff and Essex subverted the power of their respective royals in similar ways, but this does not mean that Hal's rise to power parallels Elizabeth's in every way, nor does it mean that Falstaff's every action in the Henry plays can be connected to a characteristic possessed by the historical Essex. In other words, I am not saying that Hal is a representation or a reflection of Elizabeth. My goal, rather, is to take a New Historicist approach, identifying some of the ways in which the social energy of Elizabeth's reign appear in Shakespeare's *1 & 2 Henry IV* and *Henry*

V. “Social energy” is a phrase used by Stephen Greenblatt in his 1988 book *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* to describe certain cultural perceptions, reactions, and behaviors that “survive at least some of the constant changes in social circumstance and cultural value that make ordinary utterances evanescent.”<sup>7</sup> According to Greenblatt, social energy was circulated “by and through” the Renaissance stage and its plays in messy and wonderful ways:

The circulation of social energy by and through the stage was not part of a single coherent, totalizing system. Rather it was partial, fragmentary, conflictual; elements were crossed, torn apart, recombined, set against each other; particular social practices were magnified by the stage, others diminished, exalted, evacuated. What then is the social energy that is being circulated? Power, charisma, sexual excitement, collective dreams, wonder, desire, anxiety, religious awe, free-floating intensities of experience: in a sense the question is absurd, for everything produced by the society can circulate unless it is deliberately excluded from circulation.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, there was no inherent emotional or experiential barrier between the world of the stage and the sociopolitical world of Elizabethan England. As an active participant in both of those worlds, Shakespeare was a conduit for social energy to flow between them. He wrote the history plays between 1597 and 1599, and his mind would have been filled with the social energy of those years: anxieties about the ability of the aging queen to hold onto power, ruminations about the nature of monarchical authority, hopes and fears about the youthful, martial masculinity represented by Essex, suspicions about the labyrinth of patronage and power

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<sup>7</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 19.

that was the English court. None of these things were represented explicitly in the second tetralogy; instead, they were torn into fragments, recombined, and added to the story that Shakespeare was trying to tell—the story of the historical Henry V’s rise to power.

As a result, we can detect distinct forms of Elizabethan social energy in many of the characters in the Henry plays, and not just in comparisons between Hal and Elizabeth, or between Falstaff and Essex. Many scholars, for instance, have argued that Hal and Essex have much in common. Peter Lake notes that “in the triumphant combination of the politics of popularity and martial honour attributed to Henry [Hal], contemporaries were being offered an image of a distinctly Essexian *modus operandi*”: noble, chivalrous, masculine, and martially victorious.<sup>9</sup> This reading is supported by the fact that Essex is mentioned in the chorus at the beginning of Act V of *Henry V*: Henry V’s glorious entry into London after the Battle of Agincourt is explicitly compared to Essex’s wished-for return from a successful Irish campaign.

<sup>10</sup> An equally valid comparison has been made by many scholars between Essex and Hotspur: both are “addicted to the politics and poses of honour,” prone to ranting, and unable to know when they have gone too far.<sup>11</sup> These lines of thought are interesting and certainly fruitful, but they have been thoroughly explored; comparisons of Hal to Elizabeth, meanwhile, have been overlooked despite their exciting implications. A consideration of how these characters behave and function similarly in their respective quests to gain and maintain authority—of their shared social energy—can shed light on the role of age in the construction of monarchical power in both Elizabethan England and in Shakespeare's plays.

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics on the Stage: Power and Succession in the History Plays* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 387.

<sup>10</sup> William Shakespeare, *Henry V* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 5.0.22-34.

<sup>11</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 392.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explore the young Elizabeth's transformation of the potential weakness of her femininity into a powerful image of feminine authority, and the ways in which this became impossible at the end of her reign. Elizabeth's position as a female monarch with no close living kin was unique, and it necessitated an equally unique strategy for the production of authority. The newly-crowned young queen took on this challenge with vigor: a reading of her early speeches to the English Parliament demonstrate that she immediately began to fashion an image for herself that combined the roles of a benevolent mother and a romantic lover with images of monarchical power. During the Essex affair, however, her feminine power faltered. The letters the queen wrote to Essex while he was in Ireland show the ways in which she allowed her favorite to act as both a pouty, disobedient child and a privileged lover, choosing not to punish him even as his actions were growing increasingly dismissive of her role as queen. When Elizabeth finally decided to reassert her power and censure Essex, it was too late: he had led a rebellion against her, and she had no choice but to have him executed. Overall, a survey of Elizabeth's speeches and writings throughout her reign shows the skillful ways in which she negotiated the relationship between power and femininity.

My second chapter illuminates the similarities between Elizabeth's process of power production (explored in the previous chapter) and the way in which Hal establishes his authority in *1 & 2 Henry IV*, arguing that the methods used by the two monarchs are similar and can serve as a basis of comparison. Like Elizabeth's, Hal's power is dependent on the act of calling upon a potentially dangerous force, infusing it with authority, and keeping it carefully under control. Hal's relationship with Falstaff perfectly demonstrates this process: the young prince invites the old knight to view him as part of the seedy tavern world, but he constantly prompts Eastcheap's

true inhabitants (Falstaff included) to verbally frame Hal as a royal authority when they interact with him. Falstaff, as the principal symbol of Hal's delinquency, represents just as dangerous a subversive force as Essex—especially as the plays wear on—and yet Hal does a much better job of controlling Falstaff than Elizabeth does of controlling Essex. This, I argue, is due in no small part to differences in age between the two monarchs.

In chapter three, I begin to explore this age gap, focusing on the ways in which Hal's production of power is inherently dependent on his youth: both his delinquency and his monarchical authority are functions of his status as a young man. In *2 Henry IV*, Shakespeare relegates both delinquency and power to the realm of youth. He classifies delinquency as a naturally youthful characteristic by pushing older characters such as Falstaff out of their lives of sin and presenting the lewd, unruly behavior of young people as acceptable (even encouraged). Furthermore, Shakespeare frames power as the rightful property of the young by placing it out of the reach of older characters and positioning Hal's youthful reign as necessary and inevitable. I argue that Hal is able to manipulate both delinquency and power so easily and successfully because the play creates an environment in which his youth makes this possible.

Chapter four tests the effects of the relationship between age and power revealed in chapter three by examining the impact of age on Elizabeth's production of her authority. In this chapter, I argue that early modern intersections of age and gender made it more difficult for Elizabeth to produce power based on the feminine roles (mother, lover, virgin) that she had been able to juggle effectively as a younger queen. Early modern society associated these roles with youthful femininity, which Elizabeth no longer possessed. Realizing this, she shifted the basis of her power from hybrid feminine power to hybrid aged power, emphasizing her role as faithful

caretaker of her subjects and relying on her legacy as a successful monarch. In this way, she was able to make her age powerful. Ultimately, this thesis will argue that a comparison of Elizabeth's production of power to Hal's illuminates the ways in which age interacted with monarchical authority in Elizabethan England.

## Chapter 1

### “That *man*”: Elizabeth I, Essex, and the Production of Feminine Power

When Sir John Harrington returned from Ireland in 1599, the queen was furious. According to a letter written by Harrington several years later, Elizabeth I “chafed much, walked fastly to and fro, [and] looked with discomposure in her visage”; all traces of her usual “sweet and refreshing” demeanor were gone.<sup>12</sup> When Harrington attempted to kneel before her, she grabbed him and spoke furiously: “By God’s Son, I am no Queen. That *man* is above me. Who gave him command to come here so soon? I did send him on other business.”<sup>13</sup> When she eventually dismissed Harrington, he was eager to escape her wrath. “If all the Irish rebels had been at my heels, I should not have had better speed,” he swore in his letter.<sup>14</sup> And yet Harrington knew that the main thrust of Elizabeth’s anger was not directed toward him. There was someone else much more deserving of the monarch’s wrath: “that *man*,” the one who had so enraged the queen, was Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex. Essex had been sent to Ireland to lead the fight against Tyrone, but he had been ignoring the queen’s direct orders for months. Though Elizabeth had expressly forbidden him from reentering England without her permission, he had returned to plead for forgiveness in person—with a standing army, which was illegal at the time. All of this prompted Elizabeth to wonder furiously “Who gave him command to come here so soon?”

At first glance, this question seems easily answerable. No one gave Essex permission to reenter England—in fact, Elizabeth had expressly forbidden it. A closer look at Elizabeth’s relationship with Essex, however, reveals a long string of strange behavior on both sides that

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<sup>12</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 497.

<sup>13</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 497.

<sup>14</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 497.

culminated in Essex's beheading for attempted rebellion. In many ways, it was Elizabeth's own leniency and indulgence that caused Essex to think he could disobey her orders and return home before his mission in Ireland was complete. Throughout her reign, Elizabeth had taken every opportunity to twist to her advantage the danger inherent in being a female ruler in England's heavily patriarchal power structure: she actively invoked her feminine "weakness" in order to construct a new version of feminine authority. The Essex affair, however, revealed the limits of Elizabeth's ability to manipulate her gender. As the royal favorite, Essex was meant to play the male part to the feminine roles Elizabeth inhabited. In the last years of her reign, however, Essex seems to have lost sight of his proper place, which positioned him perfectly for dangerous disobedience. In this chapter, I will explore how Elizabeth constructed a hybrid image of feminine power through the infusion of femininity with the language of authority, examining the ways in which this process broke down during the Essex affair.

### I. Queenship in early modern England

In order to understand how Elizabeth produced her power, it is first necessary to understand the cultural and political milieu in which she ruled. Elizabeth was in a unique position when she came to the throne: she had no close male kin and no husband. In *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation*, Louis Montrose describes the situation as paradoxical in that it was seen as both a weakness and a strength by observers.<sup>15</sup> Francis Bacon, he notes, wrote that Elizabeth had "no helps to lean upon," but also that "she was herself ever her own mistress"—her position as a female without close male family members was both a hindrance and a means of preserving her authority.<sup>16</sup> Bacon's double-sided commentary proves,

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<sup>15</sup> Louis Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth: Authority, Gender, and Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 16.

according to Montrose, that Elizabeth managed to manipulate gendered challenges to her authority in such a way that they advanced her personal power.<sup>17</sup> This successful manipulation of a potentially harmful force is the focus of this chapter: throughout the early years of her reign, the queen continuously invoked the feminine roles that society expected her to play so that she could place them within a context of power. In such a context, her gender did not constrain her at all—rather, it allowed her to play a unique role in relation to the nation.

Elizabeth, however, was not the only one who attempted to control the definition of feminine rulership. Creating a monarch was a complicated process—at the moment Elizabeth was named queen, her image began to be constructed not only by the queen herself, but by her courtiers, her advisers, her subjects, poets, writers, artists, and many others.<sup>18</sup> Montrose notes that by participating in the creation of the queen's image, these people gained the ability to use it for diverse purposes:

Tudor royal images were employed in a wide range of cultural work, which included enhancing and subverting the charisma of the monarch; legitimating and resisting the authority of his or her regime; seeking to influence royal sympathies and policies in matters religious, civic, and military; and pursuing personal advantage in the competition for courtly favor and reward.<sup>19</sup>

In other words, Elizabeth's control over the production and use of her power was not complete; Greenblatt acknowledges that this is true in most cases where subversion and containment occurs.<sup>20</sup> Attempts to control Elizabeth's image, however, often only bolstered her authority:

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<sup>17</sup> Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Montrose, *The Subject of Elizabeth*, 14.

<sup>20</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 37.

compelling instances of this can be found in her addresses to Parliament on the subject of marriage.

## II. Powerful femininity in words

The clearest example of Elizabeth's unique ability to combine perceptions of her gender with power can be seen in her early speeches to Parliament. In these speeches, she embraces the feminine roles of mother and wife that Parliament is foisting on her while simultaneously placing those roles in a royal context. When Elizabeth was crowned, Parliament almost immediately began to urge her to marry and have children. Her first reply to these requests came in her first speech before Parliament (1599),<sup>21</sup> and her second came in her Answer to the Commons' Petition That She Marry (1563).<sup>22</sup> In these speeches, Elizabeth firmly and somewhat testily explains to Parliament that she will not be coerced into marriage. She perceives their attempts to force her into more traditional feminine roles as threatening to her power as a monarch, and she takes this opportunity to remind them of their positions as subjects:

The manner of your petition I do well like of and take in good part, because that it is simple and containeth no limitation of place or person. If it had been otherwise, I must needs have misliked it very much and thought it in you a very great presumption, being unfitting and altogether unmeet for you to require them that may command . . .<sup>23</sup>

Here, Elizabeth constructs her own image of herself as an independent, resolute ruler against Parliament's view of her as a weak-willed female vulnerable to manipulation by older, more established men. By characterizing these men as those "whose duties are to obey" and cautioning

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<sup>21</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 125.

<sup>22</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 127.

<sup>23</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 126.

them not to attempt to “frame [her] will to [their] fantasies,”<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth pushes back against Parliament’s attempts to rob her of agency.

To this image of monarchical power, she adds a representation of feminine power. Refuting the implicit charge that not to marry would be to forsake the very nation she is bound to serve (by leaving it heirless), she uses the idea of motherhood to shift the way in which her femininity is perceived: “I assure you all that, though after my death you may have many stepdames, yet shall you never have any a more mother than I mean to be unto you all.”<sup>25</sup> In this statement, Elizabeth is transforms the role of motherhood from that of a mere vessel meant to carry the next king into that of a caretaker of England itself: instead of bearing and raising an heir, she will bring her country into new life and nurture it as it grows. Thus, she is powerful not just as a link in the line of succession, but as an individual monarch who will guide and care for the nation as a mother would. She is careful to make clear the fact that this authoritative female role is firmly tied to her God-given right to rule: at the beginning of her Answer to the Commons’ Petition That She Marry, Elizabeth states that her womanhood would make her afraid to speak about this grave issue if not for the “princely seat and kingly throne wherein God (though unworthy) hath constituted [her].”<sup>26</sup> The words “princely” and “kingly” are important here. Elizabeth is grafting together two worlds: the explicitly masculine world of monarchy, and the feminine world of her own existence as a woman. She does not reject her femininity in favor of monarchy; both qualities of her rule are acknowledged and intertwined in these two speeches and in orations throughout her reign.

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<sup>24</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 126.

<sup>25</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 128.

<sup>26</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 127.

This clever construction of hybrid authority capitalized on Parliament's early attempts to pressure Elizabeth into traditionally feminine roles: she produced her own unique image of powerful femininity in the process of navigating Parliament's bids to use her gender to control her. It could be argued that she did not do this consciously; the obvious indignation present in her addresses to Parliament indicates that her reaction may have been based on a simple belief that Parliament was presumptuous to attempt to intervene in her personal affairs.<sup>27</sup> I would argue, however, that the queen consciously played upon the inherent weakness of her gender to construct a powerful and highly specific version of authority. A clear example of this is her Latin Oration at Cambridge University (1564), which she begins with a direct invocation of her womanhood:

Most loyal subjects in this much beloved University of Cambridge, although womanly modesty forbids crude and uncultivated speech in an assemblage of most learned men, nevertheless the intercession of my noblemen and my good will toward the University induce me to speak, however rudely.<sup>28</sup>

The contrast between "womanly modesty" and the "most learned men" of the university does similar work to that between the role of "mother" and the "kingly throne" of Elizabeth's Answer to the Commons' Petition That She Marry. By depicting Cambridge as a masculine world which has been entered by her feminine presence, she is furthering her image as a figure who is able to adapt her rulership to femininity. The fact that her speech was given in perfect Latin, complete with a pithy reference to Demosthenes, made it clear that she was the embodiment of a wise, learned femininity that was well-suited for power. The most important aspect of this speech,

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<sup>27</sup> See Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations*, page 31 for a discussion of the role of Machiavellian intention versus genuine belief in the process of subversion and containment.

<sup>28</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 131.

however, is that it is a calculated manipulation of gender on Elizabeth's part. Unlike the references to femininity in her speeches to Parliament, the opening sentence of this speech comes unprovoked (as far as modern historians can tell) by any specific gender-based challenge to her authority. Here, Elizabeth has deliberately chosen to call upon the conventional belief in feminine weak-mindedness so that she can construct a powerful image of feminine learnedness against it. It is difficult to believe that she produced this effect by accident.

### III. The breakdown of feminine power

Thus far I have discussed the ways that Elizabeth was able to craft a uniquely hybrid form of feminine power during the early years of her reign; I will now explore an instance late in Elizabeth's reign in which her method of producing her authority faltered. The Essex affair illustrates the ways in which inhabiting traditional feminine roles can lead to a loss of authority on the part of the monarch. Early in her reign, Elizabeth's power had been enhanced by royal favorites like Essex, who acted as male counterparts to the gendered roles she played. As she aged, however, Elizabeth found it more and more difficult to present herself as a virgin, lover, and mother, and the power of these roles decreased, allowing Essex to take advantage of his position in a way that former favorites had never dared. Elizabeth's relationship with the Earl of Essex came about many years after the early speeches I have just examined. The ward of Elizabeth's beloved Lord Treasurer Burghley, Essex had grown close to the queen during Burghley's years of service. He was a powerful force at court. Sir Robert Naunton observed that after Burghley's death the court split into two factions—"the swordsmen and the bureaucrats"—headed by Essex and Burghley's son, Secretary of State Sir Robert Cecil.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 51.

Essex's role as the queen's favorite was extremely complicated. Elizabeth had used her favorites to enhance her feminine power before, but Essex was different. Former favorites such as Hatton and Leicester had been close to Elizabeth's own age and had understood that despite the privileges with which their ruler endowed them, they must ultimately submit to her. Essex was thirty years younger than the queen, and James Shapiro writes in his book *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* that his interactions with her "veered wildly between the maternal and the erotic."<sup>30</sup> He was accustomed to getting what he wanted by withdrawing from the court to sulk until the queen humored him (it was this strategy that won him the title of Earl Marshal in 1597<sup>31</sup>), but he also wrote lavish love letters to Elizabeth that verged on the Petrarchan.<sup>32</sup>

Elizabeth forgave Essex's arrogance and impetuosity again and again. Once, annoyed that Elizabeth had refused to consider his pick for Lord Deputy in Ireland, he turned his back on the queen in disgust. He had crossed a line: a man less in the queen's favor would have been executed for this insolence. Elizabeth merely boxed Essex on the ears and ordered him to leave court. Incensed, Essex foolishly reached for his sword; only the Lord Admiral's intervention prevented him from drawing on the queen, a treasonous act. As he stomped out of the room, he retorted that he would never have stood for such treatment at the hands of Elizabeth's father.<sup>33</sup> What ensued was a strange mixture between a lover's quarrel and a mother's punishment of a misbehaving child. Neither party would admit wrongdoing, but each needed the other badly. It was clear that Elizabeth's close relationship with Essex was not merely a way to secure his loyalty; she was truly fond of him. A sign that Essex was taking the queen's generosity too far

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<sup>30</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 56.

<sup>32</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 301.

<sup>33</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 58.

came in a letter he wrote during this period of hostility. He chastised the queen for the “intolerable wrong” she had done him and accused her of having “broken all laws of affection, [and] done so against the honour of [her] sex.”<sup>34</sup> Apart from the fact that this was an extremely inappropriate letter to send to the Queen of England, Essex’s accusations blatantly exploit her maternal and romantic affections for him. He asserts that to reprimand him is to betray their personal bond, which he characterizes as dependent on her willingness to play a traditionally submissive feminine role. The queen herself had sowed the seeds of this attitude by encouraging Essex to think of her as a mother or a lover. She had encouraged Parliament to think of her in a similar way years earlier, but Essex lost sight of the link between her God-given power as monarch and her femininity. He was beginning to believe he could get away with treating her as he would treat a much less powerful woman.

By late 1598, Elizabeth had grudgingly forgiven Essex; her Irish campaign was in shambles, and she needed him to lead her army. The English army had faced a crushing defeat at Blackwater at the hands of the Earl of Tyrone, and Elizabeth chose Essex to go to Ireland and lead a counterattack.<sup>35</sup> As soon as he arrived, he began to disobey the queen’s express wishes. He appointed his friends to important military positions, attempted to name his father-in-law (Sir Christopher Blount) to the Irish Council, and knighted eighty-one of his followers.<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth prevented many of these appointments; she did not want Essex to create a “shadow court” in Ireland, loyal to Essex rather than herself.<sup>37</sup> What truly earned the queen’s ire, however, was his military strategy: instead of following explicit orders from Elizabeth to engage Tyrone’s main

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<sup>34</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 58.

<sup>35</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 65.

<sup>36</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 286.

<sup>37</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 285.

army in the north, Essex turned southward to Munster, believing that he did not have the resources for a direct attack.<sup>38</sup> Enraged, Elizabeth berated Essex in their private correspondence, using her knowledge of his youthful pride and sense of chivalric duty to wound him:

But it doth sound hardly in the ears of the world that, in a time when there is a question to save a kingdom and in a country where experience giveth so great advantage to all enterprises, regiments should be committed to young gentlemen that rather desire to do well than know how to perform it . . .<sup>39</sup>

Here, Elizabeth demonstrates her intimate understanding of Essex's psyche. Martial glory and a heroism that harkened back to the age of Henry V were his highest ideals; in telling him that he is failing to "save a kingdom" because of his youthful inexperience, Elizabeth asserts that he has missed his opportunity to play the valiant, chivalric, manly role he so longs for by behaving like a boy.

These are harsh criticisms, and yet Elizabeth never meted out actual punishment, in her letters or in practice. She simply continued to chastise the increasingly desperate Essex, and he continued to ignore her direct orders. Months into the campaign, even Elizabeth seemed to realize that she was being taken advantage of. She hints at this while reprimanding Essex for creating so many new knights, stating that if any of the new knights "dare displeas[e] [her] either by experience of [her] former toleration or with a conceit to avoid blame by distinctions," she "will never make dainty to set on such shadows as shall quickly eclipse any of these lusters."<sup>40</sup> In other words, if anyone upon whom Essex has conferred a knighthood disobeys her, she will punish them, no matter how kind she has been to them in the past. It is hard not to read this as a

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<sup>38</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 296.

<sup>39</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 494.

<sup>40</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 495.

subtle warning to Essex himself; after all, who had basked in the “experience of her former toleration” more than he?

Despite this hint of a threat, Elizabeth still did not actually punish Essex. She forbade him from coming back to England until she permitted it <sup>41</sup> and she railed publically about replacing him with Lord Mountjoy,<sup>42</sup> but she did not call him back to answer charges of disobedience, nor did she order him taken into custody when she learned of his unauthorized negotiations with the Earl of Tyrone. Here we see the breakdown and appropriation of Elizabeth’s carefully constructed feminine authority: Essex had seized upon the parental and erotic roles she was playing, overlooked the powerful connotations Elizabeth had given them early in her reign, and used them to manipulate her. This is not necessarily to say that Essex was cunningly waiting for the moment when he could use Elizabeth’s affection for him against her; there is actually evidence that Essex was suffering a mild physical and mental breakdown while in Ireland, and he did have some genuine ground upon which to refuse to attack Tyrone directly.<sup>43</sup> But he did—whether consciously or not—pervert the romantic role of a favorite into something dangerous.

Essex’s tumultuous relationship with Elizabeth ended only with his execution in 1601. Without sufficient troops to engage Tyrone’s much larger army, Essex had parlayed with the Irish lord, even offering to petition Elizabeth for his pardon. Knowing that this would enrage the queen, he gathered a group of followers and returned to England, disobeying Elizabeth’s orders to stay in Ireland until the campaign was over. When he reached Nonsuch, where Elizabeth was holding court, he burst into her bedchambers. The queen was in a state of half-dress, but Essex

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<sup>41</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 293.

<sup>42</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 297.

<sup>43</sup> Shapiro, 1599, 291.

fell to his knees and began kissing her hands, regaling her, according to courtier Rowland Whyte, with “some private speech . . . which seemed to give him great contentment.”<sup>44</sup> There is no record of what he said to her, but a sonnet he wrote around this time gives voice to his possible thoughts. In this poem, he speaks of his service to the queen as the courtly wooing of a scornful lover: “I loved her whom all the world admired, / I was refused of her that can love none; / And my vain hopes which far too high aspired, / Are dead and buried, and for ever gone.”<sup>45</sup> Evidently, Essex had taken his romantic, flattering role as favorite too far, treating Elizabeth as his lover rather than his queen.

The queen was inwardly furious and scandalized at Essex’s intrusion; Shapiro writes that “no man had ever entered her bedchamber in her presence . . . this was England’s virgin Queen and her bedchamber was sacrosanct.”<sup>46</sup> Despite this terrible breach of decorum, Elizabeth remained calm. She told Essex to clean himself up (he had not stopped to wash off the dirt from his journey before his unannounced audience), and when he came back, she reprimanded him and placed him under house arrest. He was freed in August of 1599—further evidence of the queen’s lenience where he was concerned—and in early 1601 he marched into London with a group of followers to force an audience with the queen. After a skirmish with royal forces, he retreated to his house and was soon arrested for treason. Essex was executed at the Tower of London on February 25, 1601.

At the root of his attempted rebellion was his confusion over his role as royal favorite. The favorite was meant to play the romantic counterpart to the feminine roles Elizabeth had so successfully imbued with power in her early speeches to Parliament, but Essex took this duty too

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<sup>44</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 301.

<sup>45</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 301.

<sup>46</sup> Shapiro, *1599*, 300.

far, ignoring the queen's power and treating her like a mother or a lover. Perhaps Elizabeth could have clarified Essex's position had she been willing to forcefully assert her dominance by punishing him at an earlier stage, but her affection for him prevented this. On some level, Elizabeth herself recognized her mistake. Donald Stump and Susan M. Felch write in their introduction to a collection of letters concerning Essex's fall that Elizabeth "hated signing the death warrant, feeling that she herself bore some of the blame because she had not properly reined Essex in when signs of willfulness and arrogance first appeared. Two months before her death in 1603, she was still grieving."<sup>47</sup> Why had Elizabeth's femininity no longer been powerful enough to force Essex into his proper role as submissive favorite? As I will discuss in chapter four, early modern intersections of age and gender made occupying "youthful" feminine roles such as virgin, lover, and mother infeasible for the aged Elizabeth. Her shift from a feminine power to an aged power had important implications for the role of the royal favorite, a phenomenon which I will explore in the conclusion of this thesis.

Elizabeth was not the only early modern monarch who constructed her power, whether successfully or not, through the manipulation of potentially dangerous forces. Though Shakespeare's history plays dramatized the long-dead kings of the past rather than contemporary English rulers, the social energy of Elizabeth's authority found its way into characters like Henry IV and Henry V. Stephen Greenblatt argues that the reason that power is gained through the manipulation of subversion in Shakespeare's plays is that the playwright "evidently grasped such strategies . . . by looking intently at the world immediately around him, by contemplating the queen and her powerful friends and enemies";<sup>48</sup> this is easy to believe when one compares the

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<sup>47</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 488.

<sup>48</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, 40.

ways in which Elizabeth skillfully manipulated the potential weakness of her femininity throughout her reign to Hal's production of his own power in *I Henry IV*. In my next chapter, I will establish a basis for comparison between Elizabeth and Hal, exploring the ways in which Hal's potent combination of delinquency and power is similar to Elizabeth's mixture of femininity and royalty. The similarities between the ways in which these two monarchs produced their authority will serve as a jumping-off point for my later examination of the key difference between them: age.

## Chapter 2

### “You, Prince of Wales!”: Hal’s Manipulation of Subversion

If asked to pinpoint the moment when Hal begins to embrace his role as crowned prince in Shakespeare’s second tetralogy, an astute reader could very reasonably choose the famous play-acting scene between Hal and Falstaff in act two. In this scene, Hal and Falstaff alternate roles, acting out the impending meeting between Hal and his father, King Henry IV. Hal plays his father, ranting about the corrupting influence of Falstaff: “That villainous abominable misleader of youth, Falstaff, that old white-bearded Satan.”<sup>49</sup> Falstaff, playing the part of Hal, responds with a passionate defense of himself. At first he represents himself as the embodiment of innocent fun and merrymaking, but his words gradually grow more desperate; he is evidently aware that Hal is not long for the world of Eastcheap, and he fears that the young prince will cast him off once he assumes his proper role at his father’s side. “For sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff,” he pleads, “banish him not thy Harry’s company—banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.”<sup>50</sup> Hal, in a chilling reminder of his plan to use his participation in the tavern world as a contrast to his eventual rise to glory, responds with four simple words: “I do, I will.”<sup>51</sup> While many might see this as the first instance in which Hal takes on his power as a prince, it is only the most obvious instance. Hal invokes his royal power many times prior to this pivotal scene, albeit in a much more subtle way: he is constantly prompting his tavern friends to frame their conception of him as part of the tavern world with the language of power and royalty. Drawing on the analysis of my previous chapter, this chapter will explore the ways in which Hal, like the young Elizabeth, carefully balances subversion with

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<sup>49</sup> William Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2.4.445-6.

<sup>50</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.457-62.

<sup>51</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.463.

images of monarchical power in order to create a public perception that acknowledges that subversion only within the context of power.

### I. Controlling subversion in *1 Henry IV*

While there are clearly differences between Hal's and Elizabeth's methods of producing power, I first want to focus on the similarities between them. It is worth thinking about the ways in which both monarchs utilize a basic element of subversion to establish authority: that is to say, they each call upon a potentially threatening force that can be manipulated in order to construct power. As I argue in the previous chapter, the dangerous force called upon by Elizabeth in her bid for power is her femininity; Hal's chosen form of subversion is youthful delinquency. There are important differences in both the nature of each monarch's subversive force (one is imposed by biology, the other chosen willingly) and in the ways that each figure manipulates that subversion; these differences are bound up with issues of gender and age, and will be explored in subsequent chapters. For now, I would like to emphasize the fact that the power of both monarchs depends on the essential act of effectively controlling subversion. As I have previously demonstrated, Elizabeth presented herself as a motherly figure and as the subject of erotic and courtly desire to her favorite, the Earl of Essex. By extending an invitation to view her as inhabiting roles which could undermine her power as a ruler, she made Essex an agent of the weakness which she would need to control in order to maintain power. Allowing Essex to view her (and treat her) as a mother figure or a lover figure was inherently dangerous; if she failed to sufficiently emphasize her authority, her relationship with Essex would destabilize the rigid hierarchy between queen and favorite. If she had successfully empowered her gender, however—as she routinely did early in her reign—Elizabeth would have produced an image of

powerful femininity that would not only control her perceived feminine weakness, but transform it into a strength. The Elizabethan sources examined in the previous chapter demonstrate this process: they show how the young Elizabeth took the gendered roles that she was expected to perform and asked her subjects to view them in the context of royal power.

Hal's relationship with Falstaff functions in a similar way. He invites the old knight to view him as a member of the tavern world: someone who is just as delinquent as Falstaff is. As in the case of Elizabeth's invocation of feminine roles, this is a risky move because it disrupts the hierarchy between prince and subject, but the risk is mitigated by the fact that both Falstaff and Hal's other tavern friends are constantly injecting images of royal power into their interactions with the prince. This is visible in the very first scene in which we see Falstaff and Hal interact. One of Falstaff's jests centers around Hal's status as crowned prince: "And I prithee, sweet wag, when thou art king, as, God save thy grace—majesty, I should say, for grace thou wilt have none . . ." <sup>52</sup> Though Falstaff seems to be mocking Hal's royalty, the very fact that this is the quality of Hal's that he chooses to mock indicates his constant awareness of Hal's royal status. It is also important to note that when he asserts that Hal will have no "grace" as king, he immediately replaces this word with "majesty," an even more intense invocation of royal power. Though Falstaff's jests might seem like threats to the hierarchy between ruler and subject, his constant and unwavering framing of Hal as the future king tempers his irreverence with a certainty as to who is in control.

Another key example of Falstaff's repeated recognition of Hal's power occurs when Falstaff returns from his foiled attempt to rob a caravan containing money from the king's

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<sup>52</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 1.2.14-17.

exchequer. Hal and Poins have played a trick on Falstaff: after watching Falstaff and his companions rob the caravan, they attacked the robbers in disguise, and Falstaff fled immediately. Hal and Poins are betting that Falstaff will spin a grand tale about his encounter with the disguised attackers, which Hal can then debunk by revealing that it was in fact he and Poins who attacked Falstaff; Falstaff will thus be humorously humiliated. Upon returning to the tavern, Falstaff berates Hal for not being present to battle the mysterious attackers with him, calling the prince a “villainous coward”<sup>53</sup> and lamenting that England has come to such a state that Falstaff is one of the few brave and honorable men left in the country.<sup>54</sup> His insults are remarkably daring when one considers that they are directed toward the heir apparent:

A king’s son! If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath, and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of wild geese, I’ll never wear hair on my face more.

You, Prince of Wales!<sup>55</sup>

Recall that Elizabeth could have executed Essex for simply turning his back on her; offending a king was considered absolutely unacceptable in Shakespeare’s time, and offending a future king was only slightly less dangerous.

Furthermore, accusations of cowardice had special force among the nobility in early modern England. *The Courtier*, Baldassare Castiglione’s 1528 etiquette guide for members of the nobility who resided at European royal courts, illustrates the extreme importance given to bravery at arms in a man of noble birth. “But to defend the particulars,” says one of Castiglione’s characters, “I look upon the true and principal profession of a Courtier to consist in the skill of arms, which I would have him exercise with much life and activity; and to be distinguish’d

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<sup>53</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.122.

<sup>54</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.124-126.

<sup>55</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.130-133.

among others for his bravery and courage . . . for should he faint in the time of tryal, it would be attended with the utmost reproach.”<sup>56</sup> A few pages later, Castiglione emphasizes this point by noting that a true courtier “will always shew himself brave and courageous, and expose himself with the foremost against the enemy,”—especially if his superior is watching.<sup>57</sup> Both Shakespeare and his audience would have been aware of this culture, and would understand the weight of an accusation of cowardice. Hal’s caravan robbery joke turns on the humiliation inherent in Falstaff’s characteristic decision to run from his “attackers,” although the fact that Falstaff is associated with the liminal space of the tavern rather than the high-stakes setting of the court is a key factor in the joke’s interpretation as humorous rather than seriously offensive. Hal, on the other hand, occupies a central position in the world of the court despite his delinquency—unlike Falstaff, he is a serious character rather than a purely comical one. And yet Hal, upon hearing these hearty accusations of cowardice, playfully continues questioning Falstaff on the nature of the attack he supposedly suffered, unthreatened by Falstaff’s jabs at his honor.

Hal is so unconcerned with Falstaff’s verbal attacks because they represent a perfect example of his control over their subversiveness: even in the process of upbraiding Hal, Falstaff still explicitly recognizes the fact that he is indeed a prince. In fact, the old knight’s insults are based on the very fact of Hal’s royalty; he frames his accusation of cowardice in relation to Hal’s position as a “king’s son”<sup>58</sup> and the “Prince of Wales.”<sup>59</sup> The image of Hal presented in Falstaff’s jokes is hybrid: Hal is clearly a delinquent youth, but he is also the future monarch, and the

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<sup>56</sup> Baldassarre Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano; or, The Courtier, and a New Version of the Same into English, Together with His Other Celebrated Pieces, as Well Latin as Italian, Both in Prose and Verse; to Which Is Prefix’d the Life of the Author*, trans. A.P. Castiglione (London: H. Slater, 1742), 31.

<sup>57</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 33.

<sup>58</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.130.

<sup>59</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.133.

former perception is never allowed to overcome the latter. Overall, both Elizabeth's early speeches and Hal's interactions with his tavern friends are filled with references to royal power that curb the danger of the subversion against which each figure is attempting to construct authority. Both sets of discourse raise subversive ideas—for Elizabeth the dangerous force is feminine weakness, for Hal it is unkingly delinquency—but these ideas are kept neatly under control by constant invocations of power.

## II. Hal's indirect regulation of subversion

Some readers might argue that these two processes are fundamentally different because in Elizabeth's case it is the monarch's language that infuses power into the weakness, while in Hal's it is the subject's repeated invocations of the monarch's authority that produces a hybrid image of power. This is a valid point: in Elizabeth's early speeches, as my previous chapter demonstrates, the queen herself imbued feminine imagery with the language of monarchical authority; this caused her subjects to think and speak about her in a similar way. We rarely see Hal verbally embrace his royal status in this way; it is those around him who constantly appeal to his royal status, seemingly unprompted by Hal. While it may seem that Falstaff and the other tavern folk reference Hal's princeliness spontaneously, Shakespeare subtly makes clear the fact that Hal is as much in control of his image of power as was the young Elizabeth.

A key demonstration of this is Hal's taunting of Francis, a young apprentice working at the tavern. He places Poin in another room and instructs him to keep calling Francis's name while he himself engages the poor servant in conversation, leaving Francis torn between the two men. Lake argues that this jest is carefully constructed to highlight the prince's differences from

Francis in both intelligence and class.<sup>60</sup> He sees Hal's remark that Francis "should have fewer words than a parrot, and yet [be] the son of a woman" as the prince's way of emphasizing the point of the joke: a revelation of Francis's "gormless stupidity"<sup>61</sup> in contrast to Hal's cleverness, his inferiority in contrast to Hal's superiority. Lake then takes his argument a step further, asserting that Hal's reason for placing such emphasis on his difference from Francis is that he has gotten too swept up in his performance of delinquency. Citing the fact that the jest occurs right after Hal has integrated himself with a group of drawers (tapsters that draw wine in the wine cellar) so fully that he has become their "sworn brother,"<sup>62</sup> Lake asserts that

becoming, albeit for a transient moment, all but fully integrated into the body of the people . . . has been so seductively pleasurable, so alternately exhilarating and frightening, that he needs to stage an immediate withdrawal, a carefully choreographed demonstration of Francis's besital stupidity ('fewer words than a parrot') and of his own ineffable superiority.<sup>63</sup>

Lake is right to recognize the connection between Hal's joke at Francis's expense and his time drinking with the drawers, but I would argue against the idea that Hal's motivation for tormenting the young apprentice is his fear of losing himself in the world of the tavern; rather, invoking his superior status at a moment when he has just identified himself with the lowest people in the social hierarchy is an example of Hal's cunning manipulation of public perception. He invites his underworld companions to think of him as one of their own just as Elizabeth invited both Parliament and Essex to see her as occupying feminine roles, but staged interactions

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<sup>60</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 327.

<sup>61</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 327.

<sup>62</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 2.4.6.

<sup>63</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 328.

like this one infuse power into the subversion he has created. They prevent Falstaff, Poins, and the others from forgetting that Hal is a prince—not so that Hal himself is assured of his own superiority, but so that others are. By playing a subversive role one moment and playing upon his power the next, Hal actively creates in others the hybrid conception of himself as both rebellious and authoritative which, as I have demonstrated, manifests itself in Falstaff’s jokes. Though this way of regulating subversion is not as straightforward as the monarchical imagery that Elizabeth calls upon in her Answer to the Commons’ Petition That She Marry or in her Latin Oration at Cambridge University, it has the similar effect of keeping Hal in control of the subversion he has created.

### III. Threats to hybrid power

In sum, Hal and Elizabeth call upon similar tactics to successfully create a form of subversion that can be manipulated in order to produce power. My discussion makes clear the fact that Hal’s manipulation of Falstaff (and thus of the principal symbol of his own subversive delinquency) can be more easily compared to Elizabeth in the early years of her reign than the aged Elizabeth because of its unmitigated success: Falstaff’s subversive power is kept under control, while Essex’s is not (until it is too late). Why is this? After all, I have demonstrated that the processes used by the queen and by Hal to control subversion are quite similar. Some might answer this question by arguing that Essex was a much more serious danger to monarchical authority than Falstaff, and thus more difficult to control, but I would caution against underestimating Falstaff’s subversive potential. He might seem less threatening than Essex because of his lovable demeanor and the ease with which Hal subdues him, but a careful

consideration of his transformation over the course of *1* and *2 Henry IV* reveals that he presents just as serious a challenge to Hal as Essex does to Elizabeth.

Lake argues that while Falstaff enters *1 Henry IV* as a harmless “lord of misrule”<sup>64</sup> who represents all the boisterous, mirthful elements of life that cannot be fully suppressed by political realities,<sup>65</sup> he quickly transforms into something genuinely threatening.<sup>66</sup> As Hal slowly extricates himself from the world of Eastcheap, Falstaff follows, bringing his subversiveness “uncomfortably close to . . . the very centre of monarchical power.”<sup>67</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, the space of the tavern and the space of the court were very different in Elizabethan England, and certain behaviors had very different meanings depending on where they took place. In the world of Eastcheap, Falstaff’s irreverent behavior was tolerated: it was enough for Falstaff to subtly remind Hal that he still recognized the prince’s authority in the midst of all his jesting. As Falstaff begins to follow Hal toward what Lake calls “the centre of monarchical power,” however, his behavior becomes dangerous rather than comical. A key moment in *1 Henry IV* comes when Hal asks Falstaff for his sword, having lost his in the midst of the battle of Shrewsbury. Falstaff replies that he will not hand over his sword, but that Hal can borrow his pistol; when the prince draws the “pistol” out of its holster, however, he discovers that it is in fact “a bottle of sack.”<sup>68</sup> If Falstaff had made this joke in the tavern, Hal might have laughed, but the stakes are much higher now that Hal has transitioned into the political and military realm. He “throws the bottle at [Falstaff],” angrily exclaiming “What, is it a time to jest and dally now?”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 331.

<sup>65</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 332.

<sup>66</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 342.

<sup>67</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 337.

<sup>68</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 5.3.54.

<sup>69</sup> Shakespeare, *1 Henry IV*, 5.3.54.

In the heat of battle, Falstaff's incessant foolery becomes truly threatening to the political plot of the play, and no amount of verbal gesturing toward Hal's monarchical power can mitigate the real threat that Falstaff is coming to represent.

By the end of *2 Henry IV*, Falstaff begins to sound uncomfortably like Essex in his willingness to take advantage of Hal's affection for him:

I know the young king is sick for me. Let us take any man's horses—the laws of England are at my commandment. Blessed are they that have been my friends, and woe to my Lord Chief Justice!<sup>70</sup>

Like Essex, Falstaff exploits the monarch's good graces; his insinuation that he will use his position to help his friends calls to mind Essex's attempts to give his friends titles and knighthoods when he arrived in Ireland. Some scholars have even suggested that Falstaff acts as the king's favorite, with a powerful interest at court.<sup>71</sup> Though Falstaff does not come close to actually raising a rebellion like Essex's, he is still just as subversive to Hal as Essex was to Elizabeth. Thus, the difference between the two cases lies not in the nature of the subversion, but in the monarch's control over it. In this chapter, I have emphasized the similarities between Elizabeth and Hal, but in my next chapter I will turn to their differences in order to shed some light on Elizabeth's failure to secure power over Essex. Elizabeth differed from Hal in two obvious ways at the time in which the Henry plays were written: in age and in gender. My next chapter will consider the ways in which Hal's construction of his power in *2 Henry IV* is dependent on his youth, with the goal of providing a point of comparison for the aging Elizabeth's production of monarchical authority.

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<sup>70</sup> William Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 5.3.126-134.

<sup>71</sup> Lake, *Politics on the Stage*, 345.

### Chapter 3

#### **“Juvenal Prince”: Delinquency and power as a function of youth in *2 Henry IV***

In my previous two chapters, I establish a basis for comparison between Hal and Elizabeth I, arguing that both rulers constructed their power by calling upon potentially dangerous elements of their personas and infusing them with images of monarchical authority. Many members of early modern society would have viewed Elizabeth's femininity as a weakness; rather than hiding it, however, she called upon it in the language of power and thus made it one of the key building blocks of her image of authority. Meanwhile, Hal also invoked a quality traditionally seen as detrimental to power: delinquency. He crafted an image that made those around him aware simultaneously of his misbehavior and his royal status, thus keeping his delinquency carefully controlled until he could present it as a foil to his kingship. In my next two chapters, I will explore the different circumstances under which Hal and Elizabeth constructed their power, focusing specifically on age. My analysis will illuminate the ways in which the young and the old were viewed by early modern people, helping to explain the reasons for Elizabeth's shift away from the creation of power based on femininity late in her reign.

This chapter will begin my analysis of age by exploring how Shakespeare presents youthfulness and age in *2 Henry IV*. I have chosen to confine my analysis in this chapter to *2 Henry IV* (rather than include *1 Henry IV* and *Henry V*) because it is during this play that two interrelated processes reach their completion: the young Hal's rise to power, and the fading away of older characters such as Falstaff and Henry IV. In the development of these processes, Shakespeare relegates two important attributes to the realm of youth: delinquency and power.

Overall, this chapter will argue that the play creates an environment in which both delinquency and power are seen as exclusive functions of youth, making Hal's success almost inevitable.

### I. Theorizing age in early modern England

At this point, I want to make note of the fact that I am closer in age to Hal than to his father; I am writing this thesis from the perspective of a young person, and therefore I have attempted to adhere as closely as possible to the plays and their corresponding scholarship so as to avoid making generalizations or assumptions that could be construed as gerontophobic. In the course of making my argument, I will present a view of aging that may seem to participate in the “decline narratives”<sup>72</sup> that have dominated discussions about aging for centuries; I would like to emphasize that this is not my own view on aging, but the prevailing view of early modern England.

It is accepted among historians that the last quarter-century of Elizabeth I's reign was a time in which generational conflict and theorizing about age reached their most frenzied point.<sup>73</sup> Anthony Esler has argued that during this time, “the older generation became the first enemy of the ambitious leaders of the younger generation . . . for twenty years the institutional cards were stacked against youth, until the death of the Queen cleared the board.”<sup>74</sup> Early modern people were revising their conceptions of the interplay between chronological age, the physical body, and the social contexts that determined the meaning of age within early modern society; Christopher Martin notes that it was at this point that the word *constitution* gained its present meaning of “the ‘Physical nature or character of the body in regard to healthiness, strength,

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<sup>72</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 2.

<sup>74</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 2.

vitality, etc.’ (*OED*, 5a).<sup>75</sup> The new attention paid to the body led to an awareness of the ways in which physical changes determined one’s condition “independent of socially constituted, generic definitions,”<sup>76</sup> but this did not mean that aging was completely freed from societal constraints. Social decorum played an important role in growing old during the Early Modern period,<sup>77</sup> and early modern people thought about age as intimately connected to one’s social position.

According to Martin,

The aging subject defines himself in terms of his capacity to perform as an agent, sexual or otherwise. At the same time, however, the elder must contend with externally constituted social attitudes that presume to set limits upon his right to exercise such agency, even when he is physically capable of doing so. The respect with which a society is enjoined to treat the elder remains subtly or expressly contingent upon a self-deportment consistent with predetermined standards.<sup>78</sup>

Evidently, early modern society viewed its elders with mixed emotions: it had moved beyond the contempt for aging characteristic of the Middle Ages, but there was still a prevalent anxiety about the process of growing old.<sup>79</sup> Jaques’s famous speech in act two of *As You Like It* ends its description of the seven “acts” of man’s existence by characterizing old men as entering a “second childishness”: they are “sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, England was coming into contact with the “glorification of youth at the expense of age” that can

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<sup>75</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 2.

<sup>76</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> William Shakespeare, “As You Like It,” in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2.7.139-66.

be seen in texts such as Petrarch's *De remediis* and Castiglione's *The Courtier*.<sup>81</sup> Overall, Elizabethan England was ambivalent about its relationship with its elders, and this would have influenced both Shakespeare's and Elizabeth's conceptions of age.

## II. Age and space

Castiglione's *The Courtier* is useful in shedding light on the particular ways in which the early modern court prized youth over age. It was translated into English by Thomas Hoby in 1561, and it greatly influenced the self-conception of the English nobility throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *The Courtier* reveals the ways in which the court (and the power that went along with it) was theorized as a space specifically suited for the young: though the old could contribute to court life by sharing their wisdom and knowledge, the ideal courtier was youthful and lively. Many of the book's indications of this preference for the young are purely physical: according to Castiglione, the perfect nobleman has a face that is "most agreeable and pleasant in the eyes of all spectators"—it should be "very manly and graceful," but not "soft and effeminate."<sup>82</sup> He must also be "neither too large nor too small in size,"<sup>83</sup> for "men of prodigious bulk, beside that they are usually of duller parts, are more unfit for any feats of activity, which we desire [the] Courtier to be expert in."<sup>84</sup> In other words, Falstaff is not the perfect courtier; in fact, he is physically the opposite of Castiglione's ideal.

The early modern court did not just have a positive view of the young; its view of aging was actively negative. The opening of Book II of *The Courtier* consists of a rant against the ways in which the old ruin the fun of the young by constantly "lamenting . . . the degeneracy of the

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<sup>81</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 15.

<sup>82</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 36.

<sup>83</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 36.

<sup>84</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 37.

[current] age.”<sup>85</sup> The old, Castiglione argues, only see the old days as superior because the present holds no joy for them:

Whence the sweet flowers of delight fall at that time of life from our hearts, as leaves fall from the trees in autumn, and instead of gay and chearful thoughts, a train of dark and melancholy apprehensions possess us, our minds discovering a weakness great as what we find in our bodies: all that remains of our past pleasures, is the remembrance of the dear time when they were enjoy’d.”<sup>86</sup>

In other words, the elderly are too weak in mind and body to enjoy the pleasures of life: old age holds nothing but sorrow and wistfulness for the youthful days in which one’s life had meaning.

There is at least the fiction of wisdom, but Castiglione does not see this as much consolation.

The most striking statement of Castiglione’s negative view of aging, however, comes on the next page: “That the minds then of the aged know not a relish of many pleasures,” Castiglione writes, “is because they are not proper subjects for them.”<sup>87</sup> Not only are the old unable to experience pleasures and happiness, but they are unsuitable for them. The delights of life, then, are naturally the domain of the young.

The delights of the court, according to Castiglione, are also only to be enjoyed by the young. After a long discussion on the necessity of the ability to sing and play musical instruments, Frederick, one of Castiglione’s characters, states that not every courtier should be using his musical talents to impress noble ladies:

[The Courtier’s] age is another thing which requires his consideration; he can think it no comely sight, to see a man in the verge of life, grey headed, toothless, wrinkled

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<sup>85</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 105.

<sup>86</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 106.

<sup>87</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 107.

throughout his face, sounding a viol, and singing in a circle of ladies, even supposing it done with tolerable skill. The reason is plain, the words of most songs are amorous, but love is the most ridiculous thing imaginable in an old fellow.”<sup>88</sup>

The youthful physical ideals of the perfect courtier are plainly visible in this passage; an old man is not pleasant to look at, and should therefore not draw attention to himself. Castiglione obviously views the space of the court as a space of youthful desire and passion, and the elderly are seen as too old, physically and mentally, to participate in this culture of love. Musical talent and amorousness, qualities which would be praised in a young courtier, are frowned upon when exhibited by an old man because the early modern court saw them as inextricably tied to age. Tellingly, when another character asks whether Frederick is insinuating that all old men should be excluded from court, Frederick replies that all members of the court, “though they be not young, endeavor to appear so: hence is it they colour their hair, and are at such pains with their beards; Nature telling them, that such pleasures are properly those of youth.”<sup>89</sup>

Evidently the world of the court was conceptualized as a youthful one, but what about the world of the lower classes? Was the realm of debauchery, gluttony, and revelry also considered the property of the young? The paintings of Pieter Brueghel the Younger (son of Pieter Brueghel the Elder, the most significant painter of the Dutch and Flemish Renaissance), help to illuminate the ways in which the social spaces inhabited by the early modern peasantry were indeed coded as youthful. *Wedding Dance in the Open Air* (1607-14), one of his most well-known works, depicts the celebration of a typical lower-class wedding ceremony:

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<sup>88</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 117.

<sup>89</sup> Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano*, 128.



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The dancing couples in this painting are foregrounded: moving in what seems to be a wild, rowdy manner, they leap into the air, bending forward and backward, hands on their hips. This is obviously a physically strenuous activity, and all the couples seem relatively young. The protruding codpieces of the male dancers indicate a youthful virility that matches their vigorous dancing. They are portrayed as physically and biologically fit to participate in the dissoluteness of the wedding celebration. The space of the peasantry, however, is not conceived of as totally youthful like the space of the court. While the eye is drawn to the young dancers in this painting, some older figures are visible near the periphery: particularly noticeable is the wrinkled, grey-haired man at the table near the back. He is not participating in the main part of the festivities, but he is still making merry: he is placing coins on a platter in front of the bride, who

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<sup>90</sup> Pieter Brueghel the Younger, *Wedding Dance in the Open Air*, Oil on canvas, 1607-14, Holburne Museum, Bath.

is smiling at his generosity. There are also older people engaging in more lewd activities: one wrinkled couple near the building in the background seems to be in the midst of a passionate embrace. Evidently, while the debauchery of lower-class spaces such as Shakespeare's Eastcheap was considered largely the property of youthfulness, the liminality and carnivalesque atmosphere of these spaces allowed for some bending of social perceptions of age. This is why (as I discuss in chapter two) Falstaff's dissoluteness is initially tolerated at the tavern.

### III. Policing the old

This brief overview of early modern opinions on growing old makes clear the fact that age was a hot topic at the time that Shakespeare wrote the second tetralogy. Considering the importance with which Shakespeare imbues age in *2 Henry IV*, this is unsurprising. In order to explore how the play creates an ideal climate for a youthful king to construct his authority, it is first necessary to think about how it codes delinquency (defined in the Henry plays as lewd behavior, association with people of low class, and a willingness to ignore both legal and social expectations) as an acceptable attribute for the young. Shakespeare accomplishes this in two ways: by pushing older characters such as Falstaff out of their lives life of sin, and by presenting the rebellious behavior of young characters as admissible—sometimes even encouraged. In order to code delinquency as youthful, Shakespeare first establishes Falstaff as a character defined by his old age. The play's descriptions of Falstaff as physically old are numerous, despite his constant insistences that he is not old at all: when the Lord Chief Justice attempts to speak with Falstaff regarding his robbery at Gad's Hill (the occasion of Hal's prank in *1 Henry IV*), Falstaff insists that the other man is unable to understand the ways of the young—among whose number

Falstaff counts himself. The Lord Chief Justice replies with a litany of the physical proofs of Falstaff's age:

Do you set down your name in the scroll of youth, that are written down old with all the characters of age? Have you not a moist eye, a dry hand, a yellow cheek, a white beard, a decreasing leg, an increasing belly? Is not your voice broken, your wind short, your chin double, your wit single, and every part about you blasted with antiquity? And will you yet call yourself young? Fie, fie, fie, Sir John!<sup>91</sup>

The combination of Falstaff's insistence that he is young and the Lord Chief Justice's listing of his physical failings as proof of his age calls upon an interesting aspect of the early modern view on aging. Martin states that the relationship between age and constitution (the state of one's physical body) had become "a curiously self-conscious commonplace" by the end of the sixteenth century, one with which the period's writers were often distinctly uncomfortable.<sup>92</sup> The example of this cited by Martin is Andreas Laurentius's *Discourse on Old Age*, translated into English in 1599. As Jaques does in *As You Like It*, Laurentius separates the life cycle into phases based on the years one has been alive, but he then adds a curious note which advises that no man "should so tye himselfe to the number of yeares, as that he should make youth and old age necessarily to depend thereupon: but that he would rather judge thereof by the rule of the temperature and constitution of the bodie."<sup>93</sup> In light of this statement, Falstaff's insistence that he is not old makes sense: if he does not feel or look old, then he is not old. The problem here is that Falstaff is, in fact, old, and the evidence presented of this is his physical body. In this way, Falstaff's physical body seems to serve as proof of two opposing lines of thought. The Lord

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<sup>91</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.169-80.

<sup>92</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 13-14.

Chief Justice uses Falstaff's deteriorating body as proof of his old age, yet Falstaff presents his physical body as proof of his youth: "The truth is," he says, "I am only old in judgement and understanding; and he that will caper with me for a thousand marks, let him lend me the money, and have at him!"<sup>94</sup> The Lord Chief Justice's argument wins out a few lines later, however, when Falstaff admits that his body is not as sound as he previously made it seem: "A pox of this gout, or a gout of this pox," he exclaims once the Lord Chief Justice is out of hearing, "for the one or the other plays the rogue with my great toe."<sup>95</sup> Evidently, age is determined in this play chiefly by a long list of unpleasant physical symptoms that, despite Falstaff's arguments to the contrary, affect one's ability to function in society as one used to. Shakespeare makes this effort to present old age as a crucial factor in society's view of a person because he wants to emphasize that Falstaff's elderliness is one of his most important qualities in the context of the play, and that it is the reason other characters constantly tell him that he is not fit for the carnivalesque tavern world in which he lives.

These other characters' reactions to Falstaff's coarse habits clearly demonstrate Shakespeare's coding of delinquency as young: where Falstaff's behavior was winked at in *1 Henry IV*, he is now constantly censured by those around him. The prostitute Doll Tearsheet, for example, asks him when he will "leave fighting o'days, and foining o'nights, and begin to patch up [his] old body for heaven."<sup>96</sup> According to Doll, brawling and sexual promiscuity are not proper activities for a man of advanced age. Significantly, it is Falstaff's body that needs to be readied for heaven, not his soul; this speaks to the aforementioned importance that this play places on the physical body as a determining factor for age and for one's place in society.

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<sup>94</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.185-7.

<sup>95</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.238-9.

<sup>96</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.4.228-31.

Shallow and Silence, two country justices who preside over a town from which Falstaff is recruiting soldiers, also comment on the inappropriateness of Falstaff's habits (albeit much more indirectly). In act three, scene one, they discuss Shallow's young manhood, during which he knew the young Falstaff. Shallow describes his lustiness and recklessness with a nostalgia that clearly places this rowdy behavior in the past: "Jesu, Jesu, the mad days that I have spent!" he says. "And to see how many of my old acquaintance are dead."<sup>97</sup> Shallow, though he is a vain and foolish man, has properly transitioned out of his unruly youth, which he recognizes as "dead" like the people that populated it; Falstaff has not. Shallow does not tell Falstaff to change his ways, but he nonetheless forces the old knight to reflect on them: when the justice attempts to speak to Falstaff about their past, Falstaff becomes uncomfortable: "No more of that, Master Shallow, no more of that,"<sup>98</sup> he says. Falstaff's unusual reticence is due to the fact that he has been confronted with an implicit framing of his current life choices as those of a rebellious youth; perhaps on some level, he realizes that the society in which he lives considers his behavior inappropriate for an old man. Regardless of whether Falstaff has recognized the error of his ways, the play clearly encourages the audience to compare Shallow's tall tales with Falstaff's everyday life, indicating that the old knight is not "acting his age." Lastly (and perhaps most crucially), Hal rejects Falstaff at the end of the play with these words: "I know thee not, old man. Fall to thy prayers. / How ill white hairs becomes a fool and a jester!"<sup>99</sup> The word "old" is filled with scorn here. Evidently, Hal has chosen to justify his rejection of Falstaff by citing the warped version of old age that the miscreant knight represents.

#### IV. Accepting youthful transgression

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<sup>97</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.2.30-2.

<sup>98</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.2.189-90.

<sup>99</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 5.5.46-7.

So far, I have made evident the ways in which Shakespeare establishes delinquency as a youthful quality by presenting it as inappropriate for an old man like Falstaff. I will now move on to a discussion of Shakespeare's presentation of Hal's delinquent behavior as acceptable, natural, and even laudable. Just as much emphasis is placed on Hal's youth in the play as on Falstaff's old age, and as with Falstaff, this happens through references to the physical body. Hal is first mentioned in *2 Henry IV* by Falstaff, who describes him as "the juvenal"<sup>100</sup> Prince . . . whose chin is not yet fledge" and states that he will "sooner have a beard grow in the palm of [his] hand than [Hal] shall get one off his cheek."<sup>101</sup>

Hal is also, however, marked as young by the characters with which he is identified. In the aforementioned lines, Falstaff is speaking to his page, a young boy given to him by Hal after the Battle of Shrewsbury. It is here that the doubling of the page and Hal begins—a doubling that is reinforced in act two, scene two, when the page delivers Falstaff's letter to Hal. As the page enters, Hal voices his expectation that Falstaff will have "transformed him ape"<sup>102</sup> (corrupted him); this is proved true when the page lets loose a clever, bawdy joke at Bardolph's expense. Hal is impressed. "Has not the boy profited?"<sup>103</sup> he asks Poins, and gives the page some money as a reward for the entertainment. The comparison of Hal to the page is evident here. Both are under the tutelage of Falstaff, and both have been influenced by the lewd old knight: Falstaff is constantly rebuked for having "misled the youthful prince,"<sup>104</sup> and the young boy is explicitly under Falstaff's control as his page. The page's presence in the play is a retelling of Hal's miseducation at Falstaff's hands, and the page's extreme youth calls attention to the age

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<sup>100</sup> A pun on "juvenile" (youthful) and "juvenalia" (jovial).

<sup>101</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.18-22.

<sup>102</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.2.68.

<sup>103</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.2.80.

<sup>104</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.140.

discrepancy between the prince and the old knight. The page acts as a youthful double for Hal, giving the audience a glimpse into why Hal's tavern excursions have been tolerated for so long. Hal is amused by the seemingly harmless witticisms that the page has picked up from Falstaff; it is easy to imagine that the court must have seen the teenage Hal's first excursions into Eastcheap as similarly harmless. Not only does this doubling serve to illuminate Hal's fall into delinquency, but it positions delinquency itself as a natural and innocuous extension of youth. While the elderly Falstaff is constantly reprimanded for "[following] the young Prince up and down like his ill angel,"<sup>105</sup> imparting his bad habits, the young page is applauded—even rewarded—by Hal for his miscreant behavior.

Evidently, Shakespeare is building a link between youthfulness and delinquency in this scene, a link which is reinforced by the ways in which the various physical markers of youth attributed to Hal are portrayed. In act two, scene four, Falstaff explicitly connects the physical fitness of youth to delinquent behavior. Supping with Falstaff at the Boar's Head, Doll Tearsheet asks the knight why Hal spends so much time with Ned Poins (a member of Eastcheap society who has by this time become Hal's closest confidant). Falstaff responds with a litany of offenses that reads very much like the Lord Chief Justice's list of Falstaff's physical infirmities:

Because their legs are both of a bigness, and a plays at quoits well, and eats conger and fennel, and drinks off candles' ends for flap-dragons, and rides the wild mare with the boys, and jumps upon joint stools, and swears with a good grace, and wears his boots very smooth like unto the sign of the leg, and breeds no bate with telling of discreet stories, and such other gambol faculties a has that show a weak mind and an able body,

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<sup>105</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.160.

for which the Prince admits him; for the Prince himself is such another—the weight of a hair will turn the scales between their avoirdupois.<sup>106107</sup>

These rowdy activities are all components of the image of delinquency that Hal has carefully constructed in the service of his eventual rise to power. Like the items in the Lord Chief Justice’s list, however, the qualities that Falstaff attributes to Hal and Poins are largely physical. Several pertain to physical appearance: the two young men’s “legs are both of a bigness” (they are fops obsessed with fashion<sup>108</sup>), and they both “[wear their] boots very smooth like unto the sign of the leg” (only men with good-looking legs wore tight boots<sup>109</sup>). Most, however, refer to physical behavior: the young men “[drink] off candles’ ends for flap-dragons” (a reference to a popular drinking game<sup>110</sup>), they “ride the wild mare with the boys” (they are sexually promiscuous), and they “[jump] upon joint stools” (indulge in hijinks<sup>111</sup>). These things all emphasize physical fitness in some form (drinking, riding, jumping, being attractive), and Falstaff recognizes this when he notes that the two young men “show a weak mind and an able body.”<sup>112</sup> This rhetoric of physical fitness is intimately tied to youth, a fact which is obvious when one considers the way that Falstaff is spoken about by the Lord Chief Justice in act one. Hal wears his boots tight on his shapely legs, while Falstaff has a “decreasing leg [and] an increasing belly”<sup>113</sup>; Hal “swears with good grace,”<sup>114</sup> while Falstaff’s “voice [is] broken”<sup>115</sup>; Hal has an “able body,”<sup>116</sup> while Falstaff is

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<sup>106</sup> “Avoirdupois” means “weight” in a humorous context; Falstaff is saying that the two young men are physically similar.

<sup>107</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.4.242-52.

<sup>108</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, p. 183, note to 2.4.242.

<sup>109</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, p. 184, note to 2.4.246-7.

<sup>110</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, p. 183, note to 2.4.244.

<sup>111</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, p. 184, note to 2.4.245.

<sup>112</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.4.249.

<sup>113</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.176-7.

<sup>114</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 2.4.246.

<sup>115</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.177.

<sup>116</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.249.

“blasted with antiquity.”<sup>117</sup> In other words, Shakespeare is drawing a contrast between youth and old age in order to make clear the fact that delinquency is the proper domain of the young rather than the old. Thus, the link between delinquency and youth is established.

#### V. Disempowering the old

So far, I have argued that Shakespeare carefully places delinquent behavior into the realm of youth, both by instructing the old to reform their ways and by encouraging misbehavior in young characters. This, however, is not the only way in which *2 Henry IV* creates the perfect climate for Hal’s production of hybrid authority: the play also shifts power firmly into the hands of the young, both by pulling it out of reach of the old and by framing it as the natural right of the youthful. The Earl of Northumberland is a clear example of the former process: a powerful leader of a doomed rebellion in *1 Henry IV*, he first appears onstage in *2 Henry IV* holding a crutch and wearing a nightcap,<sup>118</sup> two visible symbols of bodily infirmity. Other characters reference this physical debility when encouraging Northumberland to leave behind the world of politics and war. When the old earl hears of his son Hotspur’s death in battle, for example, the news briefly energizes him and he throws down his crutch and nightcap, declaring his intention to seek revenge.<sup>119</sup> His messenger Morton, however, is quick to remind him that his age precludes such strenuous action. “The lives of all your loving complices,” he says, “Lean on your health, the which, if you give o’er / To stormy passion, must perforce decay.”<sup>120</sup> The Earl of Westmoreland uses a similar tactic to pacify the rebelling Archbishop of York:

If that rebellion

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<sup>117</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.179.

<sup>118</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.1.6.

<sup>119</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.1.143.

<sup>120</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.1.163-5.

Came like itself, in base and abject routs,  
 Led on by bloody youth, guarded with rage,  
 And countenanced by boys and beggary;  
 I say, if damned commotion so appeared  
 In his true native and most proper shape,  
 You, reverend father, and these noble lords  
 Had not been here to dress the ugly form  
 Of base and bloody insurrection  
 With your fair honors. You, Lord Archbishop,  
 Whose see is by a civil peace maintained,  
 Whose beard the silver hand of peace hath touched,  
 Whose learning and good letters peace hath tutored,  
 Whose white investments figure innocence . . .  
 Wherefore do you so ill translate yourself  
 Out of the speech of peace that bears such grace  
 Into the harsh and boist'rous tongue of war . . .<sup>121</sup>

Westmoreland, like Morton, is making the case that the archbishop is too old to be participating in war or politics. He frames rebellion as the domain of “boys and beggary,” and “bloody youth” while depicting York himself as a symbol of wisdom and peace. York’s beard has been “touched” by “the silver hand of peace,” and he is clothed in “white investments”—a reference to his clerical garb, but also evocative of the whiteness of old age. In these lines, Westmoreland

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<sup>121</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.1.32-49.

weaves together the threads of physical agedness and religious peace, arguing that the archbishop should consign himself to peaceful action because of his role as a holy man, but also because of his advanced age. Participating in the high-stakes game of power and betrayal that rebellion creates would be, according to Westmoreland, for York to “ill-translate” himself. Obviously, power is not considered the proper domain for the old.

Neither, according to the play, is kingship. King Henry IV himself, the most powerful of all the older characters in the play, appears onstage for the first time in a nightgown<sup>122</sup> and for the second and final time in bed,<sup>123</sup> echoing Northumberland’s earlier physical appearance. The king’s decrepit state is constantly emphasized throughout the play: The Earl of Warwick, one of Henry IV’s most trusted courtiers, notes repeatedly that the king “hath been this fortnight ill,”<sup>124</sup> and even Falstaff notes in act one, scene two that “his highness is fallen into this same whoreson apoplexy.”<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, Henry’s physical decrepitude is described by almost everyone in the play as a product of the cares and stresses of rulership: kingship is portrayed not only as incompatible with old age, but as causing it. Falstaff comments at the beginning of the play that the king’s illness “hath its original from much grief, from study, and perturbation of the brain,” and Hal’s brother Thomas of Clarence laments that “th’incessant care and labour of his mind / Hath wrought the mure that should confine it in / So thin that life looks through and will break out.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.1.

<sup>123</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.3.

<sup>124</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.1.103-4.

<sup>125</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 1.2.104-13.

<sup>126</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.3.117-20.

Even Henry IV himself makes clear the fact that the stresses of monarchy are too much for him at his age. When Westmoreland and Harcourt bring him the news that all the rebel forces have been defeated, he is physically overwhelmed:

And wherefore should these good news make me sick?

Will fortune never come with both hands full,

But set her fair words still in foulest terms?

She either gives a stomach and no food—

Such are the poor in health—or else a feast,

And takes away the stomach—such are the rich

That have abundance and enjoy it not.

I should rejoice now at this happy news,

And now my sight fails, and my brain is giddy.

O me! Come near me now; I am much ill.<sup>127</sup>

This response makes clear the play's contention that rulership and age are incompatible—not because of any mental infirmity, as is the case in *King Lear*, but as a direct result of physical deterioration due to age. It could be argued that Henry is simply sick rather than old; after all, the historical Henry IV was only forty-five years old at the time of his death. To take this line, however, would be to ignore the ways in which the king's sickness is explicitly connected with his age. For example, one of Henry's last lines before he is carried off the stage to die is "But health, alack, with youthful wings is flown / From this bare withered trunk."<sup>128</sup> Here, health is depicted as "youthful," implicitly equating illness with age. Henry's comparison of himself to a

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<sup>127</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.3.102-11.

<sup>128</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.3.358-9.

“bare withered trunk” also emphasizes the prominent role played by age in his decline. Overall, the play emphasizes the ways in which the aging Henry’s failing health makes him unfit to rule, making clear the fact that in the world of *2 Henry IV*, power is for the young. In sum, not only does *2 Henry IV* depict delinquency as fundamentally youthful behavior, but it portrays monarchical power in the same way by rendering older characters as unfit to wield authority.

#### VI. Framing power as naturally youthful

To complete my analysis, I will explore the second way in which the play upholds youth as being uniquely suited for power: by portraying Hal’s youthful rule as a rejuvenating force for a kingdom plagued by illness and aged impotence. It is no exaggeration to refer to the kingdom as ill; Shakespeare repeatedly compares England’s problems to the sickness of its king in the play. For example, when Henry IV asks Warwick if he perceives “the body of our kingdom, / How foul it is, what rank diseases grow, / And with what danger near the heart of it,” Warwick responds, “It is but as a body yet distempered, / Which to his former strength may be restored / With good advice and little medicine.”<sup>129</sup> The Archbishop of York also uses the language of disease to speak about the state of the kingdom: when the rebels at Gaultres Forest are asked what their grievances are, he says that the whole kingdom is “diseased, / And with our surfeiting and wanton hours / Have brought ourselves into a burning fever . . .”<sup>130</sup> The use of the word “hours” is important here: York is using the rhetoric of time to gesture at the ways in which the present crisis came about due to a tangled web of alliances that have gone sour over the years. He explains the situation more clearly when the rebels are discussing whether to accept Prince John’s offer of truce, saying that the king cannot possibly weed out all the seeds of rebellion in

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<sup>129</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 3.1.37-43.

<sup>130</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.1.54-6.

his aristocracy without accidentally harming his allies: his “foes are so enrooted with his friends”<sup>131</sup> that he must make peace with the rebels. It is obvious that the sickness affecting the kingdom is—like the one affecting the king—caused largely by time.

It is the older generation that is infecting England with its old jealousies and tangled loyalties, and only Hal’s youthful ascension can purge the land of its illness by resetting the old political and social systems and starting fresh. Henry himself openly admits this to Hal on his deathbed:

To thee [the crown] shall descend with better quiet,  
 Better opinion, better confirmation,  
 For all the soil of the achievement goes  
 With me into the earth. It seemed in me  
 But as an honour snatched with boist’rous hand;  
 And I had many living to upbraid  
 My gain of it by their assistances,  
 Which daily grew to quarrel and bloodshed,  
 wounding supposed peace . . . And now my death  
 Changes the mood, for what in me was purchased  
 Falls upon thee in a more fairer sort . . .<sup>132</sup>

In referencing the “many living to upbraid / [his] gain of [the crown] by their assistances,” the dying king makes evident the fact that the political turmoil of the old generation will go with him into his grave. His death “changes the mood”: the court will no longer be a place of sickness and

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<sup>131</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.1.204.

<sup>132</sup> Shakespeare, *2 Henry IV*, 4.3.317-30.

old age, but of the youth and vitality represented by Hal. With this positive affirmation of Hal's rule, Shakespeare completes the play's portrayal of youth (rather than age) as well-suited for power.

It is worth noting that the power Hal gains at the end of this play is implicitly masculine as well as explicitly youthful. The narrative arc of the Henry plays asks Hal to prove his worthiness for the crown through activities that Castiglione would consider the proper pursuits of a nobleman: valor in battle, for example, and skill in diplomacy. The first test of Hal's readiness for leadership is his defeat of Hotspur at the Battle of Shrewsbury in *1 Henry IV*, after which Hal is given the responsibility of deciding what to do with his father's prisoners of war. This martial and diplomatic ascendancy reaches its culmination in *Henry V*, in which Hal solidifies his power by leading a military campaign in France. Overall, the authority that Hal is able to establish over the course of these plays rests partially on his ability to perform traditionally masculine tasks. Delinquency is also portrayed as a properly masculine trait: it is humorous when Falstaff cavorts in the Boar's Head, but Mistress Quickly's or Doll Tearsheet's participation in the tavern world is often depicted as pitiable. Falstaff's clowning is self-aware, but the women of Eastcheap are seen as at the mercy of their surroundings. While gender is an important aspect of Hal's production of power, it is nowhere near as important to the young prince as it was to Elizabeth I. Elizabeth's subversion wasn't tied to gender; it *was* gender, and unlike Hal's delinquency, it was impossible to simply cast off. The potent intersectionality of age and gender posed a pivotal problem for Elizabeth's production of power in a way that it did not for Hal, or even for his father. I will discuss these gendered aspects of power construction in chapter four.

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which age is presented in *2 Henry IV*, arguing that Shakespeare's linking of youth to both delinquency and power (reinforced by early modern perceptions of age) creates the ideal environment for Hal to construct a form of authority based on the manipulation of delinquency. Hal is able to successfully manipulate the potentially subversive force of delinquency because he is young; as this chapter has demonstrated, an aged Hal would never have been able to construct power based on lewd and unruly behavior, because this behavior is depicted as acceptable only for young people. His ability to inject power into this delinquency is also dependent on his youth: the play sets up a power vacuum that can only be filled by youthful vitality, thus making Hal's reign inevitable. In other words, it is easy for Hal to manipulate both delinquency and power because the play makes both functions of his youthfulness. Hal never grew old; he died at age 35. This means that we cannot know how Shakespeare would have handled an elderly Hal, although we can make guesses based on his portrayal of aging kings such as Hal's father and Lear. A better point of comparison, however, is Elizabeth, who constructed her power as a young queen in much the same way as Hal does.<sup>133</sup> My next chapter will explore the ways in which the perceptions of age and gender represented in *2 Henry IV* had consequences for Elizabeth as she aged. Like Hal's performance of delinquency, Elizabeth's performance of femininity was deeply linked to age: it was only sustainable so long as she was young enough to inhabit ethereal feminine roles such as virginity and desirability. As she aged, her femininity lost its elusive veneer, and she was forced to shift the basis of her power.

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<sup>133</sup> See two previous chapters for a discussion of this comparison.

## Chapter 4

### **“The cares of kingdoms”: Elizabeth’s transition from feminine to aged power**

Much has been made of Elizabeth I’s status as the Virgin Queen. This term, which has come to occupy an inflated space within Elizabeth’s legacy, is often seen as English society’s attempt to come to terms with its discomfort over its queen’s refusal to marry or bear an heir. Elizabeth, for her part, embraced the term, recognizing that it entailed much more than abstention from marriage. The role of Virgin Queen had many layers: prompting a strong association with the Virgin Mary, it denoted purity and fertility, holiness and desirability, divinity and motherhood. As I argue in chapter one, Elizabeth’s decision to embrace the highly feminized roles of virgin, lover, and mother in relation to her subjects gave her the unique opportunity to use her femininity to construct her power. By infusing these feminine images with power in her speech, she was able to create a hybrid version of femininity based on carefully controlling the potential danger of her gender.

This clever strategy, however, would not work forever. Unlike Hal, Elizabeth was lucky enough to grow old: by 1599, the year in which the Essex affair began, she was sixty-five years old. She was still a virgin—at least, as far as those who created her public persona were concerned—but she was no longer representative of many of the associations that had for years accompanied her image as the Virgin Queen. Furthermore, as I discuss in chapter three, Shakespeare portrays power as inherently youthful, and is it likely that some of this social energy was present in the Elizabethan court as well. Late in her reign, Elizabeth had to contend with the implications of her age: growing old meant that Elizabethan society saw her as unsuited not only for feminine roles, but for powerful ones as well. In this chapter, I will argue that early modern

perceptions of age and gender made it necessary for Elizabeth to shift her strategy away from the manipulation of “youthful” feminine roles and toward the production of an aged power that rested on her legacy and the strong relationship she had built with her subjects.

### I. Gendered aging in early modern England

As I state in chapter three, the end of Elizabeth’s reign was a time in which early modern theorizing about age reached a fever pitch: advisers who had been with the queen since her accession to the throne had died (Leicester, Walsingham, Mildmay, Hatton, Puckering, Hunsdon, Knollys, and Burghley were all gone by 1598), and ambitious young leaders were anxious for power.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, there was a new awareness of the relationship among chronological age, society, and the physical body. Early modern people, Martin notes,<sup>135</sup> defined themselves in terms of their ability to function as agents (social or sexual) within their society, but there was a growing emphasis put on the fact that their society might not view them as they viewed themselves. In other words, though Elizabeth was strong and healthy until her death in 1603,<sup>136</sup> a society profoundly anxious about the aging process might still see her as weak and declining. When Elizabeth was sixty-three, for example, she listened to Bishop Anthony Rudd preach a sermon in which he pointedly made note of Samuel’s decision to pass his authority to his sons when he grew old; he even explicitly referenced the queen’s status as one for whom “all the powers of the body [had begun] daily to decay.”<sup>137</sup> The queen’s peeved response to this was to insist that no part of her body “was any whit decayed.”<sup>138</sup> More important than this contrast,

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<sup>134</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 30.

<sup>135</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 516.

<sup>137</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 43-4.

<sup>138</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 44..

however, are the sexual implications of functioning successfully as a social agent.<sup>139</sup> One's ability to participate in procreation was an extremely important factor in the determination of social status; this was especially true for early modern women, whose worth was often tied to their ability to produce children. Though new research has shown that more women remained single than married in early modern England, marital status and fertility remained among the most important aspects of a woman's identity.<sup>140</sup>

The ability to produce children was just one way in which age was intimately related to gender. Early modern gender was highly performative: as Francis E. Dolan notes, the performance of gender through clothing, appearance, and conduct was not an expression of gender, but constitutive of it.<sup>141</sup> Early modern people who attended the theater were especially aware of this: cross-dressing on the stage, although opposed by some groups, was common. At the very least, people who went to see plays written by Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson would have seen gender, class status, and age as identified by "imitable and transferable" attributes.<sup>142</sup> Thus, the gendered early modern body was culturally constructed just as the aged body was. According to Dolan,

We experience our bodies through cultural expectations, vocabularies and practices, which are, in turn, inflected by and constitutive of, not only gender, but also class, status, age, sexuality, and race/ethnicity.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 9.

<sup>140</sup> Francis E. Dolan, "Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England," in *Gender, Power, and Privilege in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jessica Munns and Penny Richards, 12-13.

<sup>141</sup> Dolan, "Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England," 8.

<sup>142</sup> Dolan, "Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England," 9.

<sup>143</sup> Dolan, "Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England," 12-13.

In other words, perceptions of gender are (as they were in the early modern period) created by cultural attitudes that take into account other culturally constructed concepts—including age. It is for this reason that the anxiety surrounding aging during Elizabeth’s reign was inseparable from conflicts relating to gender.

Women experienced a heightened version of the negative early modern opinion on aging: they were seen as entering old age sooner than men, and it was believed that they aged faster.<sup>144</sup> Because of the association between widowhood and old age, early modern women could become “elderly” when they were relatively young: their husbands often died much earlier than they did.<sup>145</sup> Lynn Botelho has argued that the onset of menopause could also bring on perceptions of old age: menopause often caused changes to a woman’s appearance, and the “centrality of outwardly observable signifiers of status in early modern England”<sup>146</sup> meant that “looking old” was, in effect, being old. Women who decided not to marry at all fared no better; they were often referred to by derogatory names such as ‘old maid’ and ‘superannuated virgin.’<sup>147</sup> Martin points out that there was a contemporary artistic movement that portrayed well-known female figures such as Helen, Cleopatra, and Lucretia as “elderly grotesques” who could not have exerted the power that they did over men in the decrepit state in which they were depicted.<sup>148</sup> Elizabeth was acutely aware of the ways in which her society viewed its women as they aged, and she took special care to manage the physical aspects of her image not out of vanity, but out of genuine political necessity.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 32-3.

<sup>145</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 33.

<sup>146</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 33.

<sup>147</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 33.

<sup>148</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 33.

<sup>149</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 33.

Susan Frye has argued, however, that though Elizabeth was very skilled at “engendering” herself throughout her reign, her strategies “could not entirely counteract the queen’s greatest liability, her own aging female body.”<sup>150</sup> This is partially true; Elizabeth’s aging body did present a challenge to the way she constructed her power during the second half of her reign. Elizabeth was, however, too brilliant a manipulator of her own image to ignore the fact that she could no longer effectively control the feminine roles that her society viewed as the property of younger women. Martin has coined the term “politics of longevity” to describe the ways in which Elizabeth pragmatically dealt with her age,<sup>151</sup> and I would like to expand upon this phrase to explore the specific mechanisms through which she maintained her authority as she entered her sixth decade.

## II. The hybridization of the aging body

Now that I have provided the historical knowledge necessary to understand Elizabeth’s decision to move away from feminine power, I will explore the ways in which the queen used her aging body to create a hybrid image of aged authority. In his explanation of Elizabeth’s “politics of longevity,” Martin argues against the prevailing narrative centered around the idea of the “Mask of Youth,” proposing instead that Elizabeth willingly embraced her aging body, even using it as an instrument of her power. Of particular importance to this thesis is Martin’s exploration of the ways in which Elizabeth often “surrenders to a decline narrative chiefly as a means of reiterating what gives substance to her age, namely ‘that after twenty-eight years’ reign I do not perceive any diminution of my subjects’ good love and affection towards me.’”<sup>152</sup> In other words, Martin sees Elizabeth as creating a hybrid image of power that combines an

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<sup>150</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 31.

<sup>151</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 31.

<sup>152</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 43.

acknowledgement of her age with a reiteration of her well-established authority. The strongest example that Martin gives of this process is Elizabeth's 1597-1598 series of Privy Council Chamber meetings with Andre Hurault, Sieur de Maisse (the ambassador sent by Henry IV of France to discover Elizabeth's intentions regarding their mutual war with Spain).<sup>153</sup> De Maisse kept detailed notes of his encounters with the queen; in one journal entry, he recounts a moment when Elizabeth took off her glove, showing her bare hand to de Maisse and saying "Don't you know that a king's hands are far-reaching?"<sup>154</sup> The sight of her aged body prompted a mixed response in de Maisse: he wrote that her hand was "formerly very beautiful," but noted that it now looked "very thin, although the skin [was] still most fair."<sup>155</sup>

Even more strikingly, de Maisse records several incidents in which Elizabeth bared her breast to him. When he arrived for their second meeting, for example, the queen was wearing "a petticoat of white damask, girdled, and open in the front, as was also her chemise, in such a manner that she often opened this dress and one could see all her belly, and even to her navel."<sup>156</sup> She also decided to forgo her usual heavy makeup during these meetings.<sup>157</sup> Martin points out that much recent scholarship on these encounters is tainted by a "repugnance for the aged physique so startlingly exposed,"<sup>158</sup> and he argues for an interpretation focused not on Elizabeth's supposed vanity in revealing her body to de Maisse, but on the ways in which the baring of her skin was a performance calculated to provoke a specific reaction in the ambassador:

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<sup>153</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 48.

<sup>154</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 49.

<sup>155</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 49.

<sup>156</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 51.

<sup>157</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 54.

<sup>158</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 52.

She kept her aged body visible and readable, and her self-exposure served to affirm rather than suppress her physical age. The French ambassador would be allowed to witness, for the larger benefit of his younger sovereign, how her ability to maintain executive vitality cooperated with her physical subjection to time.”<sup>159</sup>

In short, Elizabeth showed de Maisse how her power merged seamlessly with the process of aging. She was well aware of the symbolic power that her aging body held: the powerful contrast between her visible physical decline and her evident physical strength (“It is a strange thing to see how lively she is in body and mind and nimble in everything she does,” wrote de Maisse in his journal) left the French ambassador with a composite image of a queen whose experience was her greatest strength. In chapter three, I demonstrate that power was considered the domain of the young in Shakespeare’s *II Henry IV*. The aging Elizabeth’s challenge was to surmount this perception: to convince her subjects that age was well-suited for power. She did this by seamlessly blending her visibly aged body with her clearly undiminished authority.

The similarities between this way of establishing her power and Elizabeth’s earlier methods involving her gender are evident. The roles she drew upon as a young queen were those of virgin, mother, and object of desire. As an older woman, she focused on roles such as protector, keeper of hard-won wisdom, and respected leader. Martin has shown how Elizabeth used her physical body to embrace these roles; I will analyze the ways in which she embraced them through her speech.

### III. Shifting the basis of power through speech

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<sup>159</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 52.

A good place to begin exploring Elizabeth's transition into using her age as a source of power in her speeches is her famous address to the troops at Tilbury on August 9, 1588, just after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This speech can be seen as the turning point in Elizabeth's departure from her former way of constructing power: in it, she references her femininity, but it is no longer the principal basis of her authority. Consider what is perhaps Elizabeth's most-quoted line: "I know I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and a king of England too . . ." <sup>160</sup> Here we can see Elizabeth juxtaposing her gender with claims to royal power, as she did earlier in her reign. This line is balanced, careful not to tip too far toward either vulnerability or power: "weak" and "feeble" are balanced by "heart" and "stomach," while the two more weighty terms—"woman" and "king"—also work together to equalize the statement. Her physical position as a powerful female in the overwhelmingly male space of the battlefield compounds this effect.

It seems that Elizabeth has conjured up the image of powerful hybrid femininity that served her so well as a young queen, but if we expand our analysis to the rest of the passage, the dominant image changes. Elizabeth goes on:

And take foul scorn at that Parma<sup>161</sup> or any prince of Europe should dare to invade the borders of my realm. To the which rather than any dishonor shall grow by me, I myself will venter my royal blood; I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of your virtue in the field. I know that already for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns, and I assure you in the word of a prince you shall not fail of them.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 326.

<sup>161</sup> Alessandro Farnese, the Duke of Parma, was regent of the Spanish Netherlands at the time.

<sup>162</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 326.

After the meticulous balance of the previous sentence, the rest of the passage reads like a landslide. Elizabeth piles on image after image of authority: “royal blood,” “general,” “judge,” and “rewarder of your virtue” all serve to drown out the mention of her weak womanhood a few lines earlier. The last line is especially significant: in a few sentences, Elizabeth has moved from picking out specific body parts to be dubbed as worthy of rule to asserting unabashedly that she is speaking “in the word of a prince.” One might argue that the role of “prince” carries less weight than that of “king,” but Elizabeth styled herself as a prince more often than a king throughout her reign; she would not have done so if she believed the term lacked power. It is also worth noting that she calls the rulers of the European powers “princes” a few lines earlier. Though some of the men to whom she was referring were in fact princes or regents, it is almost impossible to read the line without seeing it as partially directed at Philip II of Spain (who was most certainly a king). In other words, Elizabeth seems to be using the two terms interchangeably here to claim authority.

Evidently, Elizabeth was beginning to rely less on images of hybrid femininity to establish her power. More important, however, is the stress she places on the ways in which she has proven herself as a ruler throughout her long reign:

But I tell you that I would not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear; I have so behaved myself that under God I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects.<sup>163</sup>

Elizabeth is constructing a reciprocal relationship here between her subjects and herself: she has been trustworthy and non-tyrannical, and therefore her subjects are “faithful and loving,” “loyal”

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<sup>163</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 326.

and full of “goodwill.” Elizabeth states quite explicitly here that she has reigned in a way that merits love from her subjects, and they in turn have behaved in a way that merits her trust (compare this to the reciprocal relationship between lover and beloved that Elizabeth called upon years earlier). This reference is highly dependent on temporality. She does not say that she *is* a good ruler, but rather that she *has been* a good ruler. At the time of this speech, Elizabeth was fifty-five years old and had been queen for thirty years. Although her relationship with her lords became slightly more tenuous as she aged (William Camden wrote that they grew distant “either for that they saw her now in her extreme age, or were weary of her long government”<sup>164</sup>), she had by the time of her death built up a degree of love and reverence that few English monarchs had ever attained,<sup>165</sup> and she was well on her way to this high level of respect at the time of the Armada’s defeat. She had earned enough public goodwill in her thirty years as queen to preserve her authority by calling upon her legacy, which she would continue to invoke until her death.

Elizabeth’s reliance on her legacy is even more evident in her Latin address to the heads of Oxford University on September 28, 1592. This speech is extremely reflective on the subject of time; Elizabeth begins by musing that

The cares of kingdoms have such great weight that they are wont rather to blunt the wit than to sharpen the memory. Let there be added besides a disuse of this language [Latin], which has been such and so constant that in thirty-six years I scarcely remember using it thirty times.<sup>166</sup>

In these lines, Elizabeth acknowledges the mental toll that long years of tending to “the cares of kingdoms” have taken on her, nodding at mental weaknesses that were usually associated with

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<sup>164</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 30.

<sup>165</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 502.

<sup>166</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 327.

old age (namely, forgetfulness and a lack of mental agility). She even reminds the Oxford heads exactly how long she has been queen: “thirty-six years.” This is not, however, intended as an admission that her age has “blunt[ed] her wit.” It is meant to be a statement that despite her advanced age, she is still a strong and capable ruler. The language of aging used in these lines is transformed into an assertion of power: by linking the burdens of rulership and the challenges of old age, Elizabeth places the aging process within a context of power. Furthermore, her heavy use of the language of aging is balanced by the fact that she gave this speech in perfect Latin—the queen obviously still possessed the mental sharpness of which she claimed long years of rulership had robbed her. Recall my discussion in chapter one of Elizabeth’s 1564 Latin Oration at Cambridge; in that instance, her perfect Latin served to place her professions of feminine weakness in a powerful context. Here, her polished command of the language has a similar effect on her aged weakness.

Elizabeth’s invocation of her experience as a ruler begins to produce a powerful aged power, and the way in which she positions herself in relation to her subjects finishes the process. In this speech, she continues to emphasize the mutually beneficial relationship between her subjects and herself that can be seen in the Armada speech, but she explains it in much more detail. Elizabeth states that her subjects have given her

A love that has never been heard nor written nor known in the memory of man. Of this, parents lack any example; neither does it happen among familiar friends; no, nor among lovers, in whose fate faithfulness is not always included, as experience itself teaches. It is such that neither persuasions nor threats nor curses can destroy. On the contrary, time has no power over it—time that eats away iron, that wears away rocks, cannot disjoin it. Such

are your merits, of such a kind that I would think them to be everlasting if I also were eternal.<sup>167</sup>

It is first important to note that Elizabeth speaks of her subjects' love toward her as "everlasting": untouched by temporality. In doing this, she indicates implicitly that though she herself is subject to the ravages of time, the relationship that she has built with her people during her reign is unaffected by the passing of the years—in fact, it strengthens with time, as Elizabeth proves her worth over and over again to her people. She also, however, heavily emphasizes time's power to "[eat] away iron" and "[wear] away rocks," phrases which would have prompted listeners to consider time's effect on the queen's body and mind. Elizabeth is constructing the hybrid image of aged power that has by this point become essential to her rule. By placing herself within time and her subjects' love for her outside of time, she indicates to her people how they ought to treat her as she ages: the only thing that should alter their love for her is her eventual death ("I would think [your love] to be everlasting if I also were eternal," she says). Her subjects' loyalty is not subject to time's ravages, and because her power derives from that loyalty, her power will not decay even as her body does.

Age has almost completely replaced gender as a legitimizing device for Elizabeth's power in this speech: we can see the queen sidelining her manipulation of femininity. Where the young Elizabeth expressed her relationship to her subjects in terms of feminine roles such as mother and lover, she explicitly rejects those roles in the passage above. Her subjects' love for her is emphatically *not* that of "parents" nor "lovers"; she is no longer their mother or the object of their Petrarchan desire. Instead, she speaks to them simply as their queen. "You do not have a

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<sup>167</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 327.

prince who teaches you anything that ought to be contrary to a true Christian conscience,” she says. “If, indeed, I have always taken care for your bodies, shall I abandon the care of your souls?”<sup>168</sup> Her use of the word “prince” here is significant in that it could easily have been substituted for “mother”; the sentiment of care and protection fits both roles. In her 1563 response to Parliament’s request that she marry, Elizabeth professes a similar care for her subjects’ physical and spiritual welfare by assuring them that they will “never have any a more mother than I mean to be unto you all.”<sup>169</sup> It is clear that Elizabeth no longer needed to portray herself in feminine terms—she could derive power from a unique image of aged power that rested on her legacy and her relationship with her people.

As Elizabeth’s reign drew to a close, her assertion of an aged power became even stronger. Her Latin rebuke to Polish ambassador Paul de Jaline, given on July 25, 1597, is perhaps the clearest example of the successful way in which she was able to frame her age in terms of experience, wisdom, and worthiness of respect. After listening to the ambassador harangue and admonish her in Latin over her policy of capturing Polish and Hanseatic League merchants on their way to Spain, Elizabeth responded in Latin:

If you have been commanded to use suchlike speeches (whereof I greatly doubt) it is hereunto to be attributed: that seeing your king is a young man and newly chosen, not so fully by right of blood as by right of election, that he doth not so perfectly know the course of managing affairs of this nature with other princes as his elders have observed with us, or perhaps others will observe which shall succeed him in his place hereafter.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 328.

<sup>169</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 128. See chapter one for a full discussion of this speech.

<sup>170</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 333.

Here, Elizabeth fully embraces her role as an aged queen. She contrasts her own competence with the young Polish king's ignorance, stating that because of his youth, he does not "know the course of managing affairs of this nature" as his "elders" (a reference to both his predecessor and Elizabeth herself) do. Interestingly, the Polish king's youth is associated with illegitimacy as well as inexperience: Elizabeth states that he is "newly chosen, not so fully by right of blood as by right of election." This move allows Elizabeth to claim superiority on multiple levels: she herself is older and more experienced than the Polish king, but her bloodline is also older and therefore more worthy of respect. She drives the point home by mentioning the "others" which would "succeed him in his place hereafter," drawing attention to the fact that his line was temporary, while hers was eternal (Polish kings were elected to the throne at this time<sup>171</sup>). Elizabeth takes full advantage of the image of aged power she has constructed, using both the age of her body and the age of her bloodline to assert dominance over the Polish king and his ambassador.

As I have demonstrated, the manipulation of femininity that created and sustained Elizabeth's power throughout the early years of her reign was no longer feasible during her later years as queen. As she aged, the part of her identity most dangerous to her reign became her age rather than her gender, and in order to address this new threat (as well as maximize her power), she began to rely upon a powerful hybrid agedness to preserve her authority. Her frequent ruminations on the love and respect her subjects had for her indicate that the source of her power as an aged queen was her legacy—the trust and goodwill that she had earned from her people

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<sup>171</sup> From the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, Poland upheld a tradition of electing individual kings (rather than dynasties) to the Polish throne. The king whose ambassador so offended Elizabeth in 1597 was Sigismund III Vasa, elected in June, 1587 and crowned in December, 1588 at the age of thirty-one. He was deposed in 1599.

through many years of toil on their behalf. She was powerful because she had lived for so long, not in spite of it, just as she had been powerful because of her femininity as a young queen. By building her power based on her long track record as a fair and just ruler, she made authority and age inseparable, placing power firmly in the domain of the old.

This chapter has explored how Elizabeth changed the way she shaped her authority to capitalize on early modern perceptions of age and gender, shifting from a feminine power to an aged power. Ruling in an early modern social climate that was ambiguous at best on the subject of aging (especially with regard to women), Elizabeth realized that she had to carefully control the way she presented her aging physical body. While it is true that she cultivated a youthful image centered around what is known as the “Mask of Youth” for many years, she also recognized the power that her aged body held, repeatedly allowing it to serve as a contrast to her abundant vigor and energy. The queen also engaged in this type of hybridization in her political speech: she placed acknowledgements of her many years on earth alongside assertions of the loyalty and love she had earned from her people, creating an image of aged power that replaced the feminine authority of her younger years.

That this strategy was successful is evident: her subjects’ writing reflects the emphasis that Elizabeth herself put on her powerful powerful legacy. John Davies, an English poet, lawyer, and politician who sat in the House of Commons at the end of Elizabeth’s reign, writes the following in his “Verses of the Queen” (1602):

To see this birth did angels sweetly sing;  
Now sings that nest of nightingales again.  
Joy, peace, goodwill to men they bring;

Of forty-five years thus tuning they remain.

Long may they tune that sweet and pleasant song,

And long may she, our angel, sing among.<sup>172</sup>

Davies emphasizes the “joy, peace, [and] goodwill” that Elizabeth’s years as queen have brought England, and he is careful to use the language of temporality—“forty-five years,” “remain,” “long may they tune”—to indicate his recognition of her long legacy of just rule. Thinking about Elizabeth’s shrewd ability to produce this type of response in her subjects prompts compelling, albeit unanswerable, questions about Shakespeare’s portrayal of Hal. Would an aging Henry V have been as astute as Elizabeth in framing his age as a source of authority? It is impossible to know for certain how Shakespeare would have written Hal had the historical Henry V lived longer, but the ingenious way in which Hal sheds his hybrid delinquent power in *Henry V* seems to indicate that the young king was just as wise as Elizabeth.

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<sup>172</sup> Stump and Felch, *Elizabeth I and Her Age*, 516.

## Conclusion

This thesis is largely concerned with success stories. I argue that a comparison of Shakespeare's *King Henry V* to the historical Elizabeth I illuminates the highly specific ways in which Elizabethan monarchical power could be effectively constructed, as well as the impact that early modern ideas of age and gender had on this process. Using Elizabeth's early speeches, I examine how the young queen successfully instilled power into the feminine roles assigned to her by early modern society, and I compare this skillful political maneuvering to Hal's successful fusing of delinquency and authority in order to create a similarly hybrid form of power in *Henry IV*. My analysis of *2 Henry IV* reveals that Shakespeare saw age as a significant factor in the creation and maintenance of power: Hal's delinquent authority is only effective because the play treats both delinquency and power as appropriate for a young man. I demonstrate that Elizabeth's early manipulation of her femininity was similarly dependent on age, using the queen's late speeches to show how early modern intersections of age and gender made it necessary for her to shift the basis of her power from femininity to age during the latter part of her reign.

All this is to say that both Elizabeth and Shakespeare's Hal performed monarchy right—at least by the standards of their time. They both successfully transformed potentially disadvantageous elements of their personas into the bedrocks of their power. But Elizabeth's reign was forty-four years long; although I suggest in chapter four that she was able to produce a convincing image of authority throughout her later years as queen, there were periods of uncertainty, and they can tell us much about the limits of monarchical constructions of power. I would like to conclude this thesis by briefly returning to one such moment of instability: the

Essex affair. As I note in chapter one, Elizabeth blamed herself for Essex's execution. She believed that had she reined in his insubordinate behavior earlier, she could have molded him into "a prospect for a future generation that could embody the best of what had so self-consciously collected itself and flourished over the course of her protracted reign."<sup>173</sup> When considered in the context of the arguments I make in this thesis, however, Essex's bloody end seems to be the fault of neither the young earl nor his queen. It was simply the result of the interaction between Essex's position as a young male courtier and Elizabeth's position as an aging queen: the role of a royal favorite was incompatible with that of a queen whose basis of power had shifted from her femininity to her age and experience.

Essex's confusion over his romantic, pseudo-sexual role within a court now centered around aged authority is clear in his writing about the queen. He often expresses a strong poetic denial of the queen's aging process. When he received word of the queen's Latin rebuke to the Polish ambassador, for example, he wrote to Sir Robert Cecil communicating his admiration for Elizabeth's intellectual capabilities:

Her majesty is made of the same stuff of which the ancients believed their heroes to be formed: that is, her mind of gold, her body of brass. O foolish man that I am, that can compare La Jupe Blanche<sup>174</sup> to the hardest metal. But in that wherein I mean to compare it, it holds proportion, for when other metals break and rust and lose both form and color, she holds her own—her own pure colors which no other of nature can match or art imitate.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Martin, *Constituting Old Age*, 61.

<sup>174</sup> "The White Skirt" (French); an affectionate nickname for Elizabeth.

<sup>175</sup> Marcus, Mueller, and Rose, *Collected Works*, 335.

Both Elizabeth's mind and her body are presented as unaltered by age through a comparison to tough metals, but Essex reflects quite self-consciously on his metaphorical language: "O foolish man that I am, that can compare La Jupe Blanche to the hardest metal," he says. "But in that wherein I mean to compare it, it holds proportion." There is clearly a tension in Essex's mind between the metaphorical and the literal. His comparison of the queen to hard, unchangeable metals serves to portray her as strong and resilient, resistant to the ravages of time, but the young earl recognizes that his metaphorical language is a tacit acknowledgement that there are ravages to resist: Elizabeth is, in fact, old, and Essex has trouble reconciling his consciousness of the queen's age with his obligation as a favorite to flatter her. In short, to admit that his comparison of the queen's body to gold and brass is purely metaphorical is to admit that the real, non-poetic Elizabeth has aged physically and mentally—a line of thinking which does not align with a favorite's role in relation to the queen. Essex's job was to play the male counterpart to the feminine roles that Elizabeth had by this point discarded—hence his self-interruption to note his discomfort at comparing "La Jupe Blanche to the hardest metal."

As I mention in chapter one, the role of the favorite had been extremely important when Elizabeth had drawn her authority from feminine roles: previous favorites had done the work of worshipping Elizabeth the virgin, wooing Elizabeth the lover, and honoring Elizabeth the wife. The aged queen, however, no longer based her power on these gendered images; as I have shown, she had shifted to portraying her power in terms of age. But Essex still ministered to the feminine roles Elizabeth had all but discarded in her political speech—a dangerous thing, considering that these roles were no longer sources of power. Essex, by nature of his role as a royal favorite, was forced to keep engaging with Elizabeth's femininity long after it had lost its

political and social force. Where Leicester, Hatton, and even Raleigh had seen the lover and mother of England, Essex saw simply a lover and mother. This is why Elizabeth lost control over him: he interacted with a side of her that no longer held political and social power, and thus was able to repeatedly ignore that power.

The cracks that can appear in a royal image of power are worth further study, especially when considered in the context of age. Shakespeare's *King Lear* has loomed behind this thesis from its conception; if Elizabeth derived power from her age by emphasizing her wisdom and her legacy, *Lear* is a play in which age and wisdom are completely divorced. *Lear* extends Shakespeare's placement of power firmly out of the grasp of the old: "Dear daughter," Lear says to Regan, "I confess that I am old; / age is unnecessary."<sup>176</sup> Written five years after Elizabeth's death, the play raises compelling questions about the limits of power for an aging monarch. Elizabeth had no children or husband, and she did not openly name James VI of Scotland as her heir until she was on her deathbed, which made her indispensable until the moment of her death (a rare thing for an early modern woman). For Lear, however, to be an old monarch is to be "unnecessary." A future study could explore the myriad ways that age and power intersect and diverge in this play. For example, is Lear's decision to distribute his kingdom amongst his three daughters based on an assumption that his relationship with them is reciprocal—that he cared for them, and now they will care for him? If so, how can Regan's and Goneril's rejection of Lear's age-based claim to just treatment be viewed? How is it related to the ideal of the reciprocal relationship between ruler and subject, which Elizabeth so eloquently invokes in her speeches? Does a ruler who hands over the reins of his power before his death immediately become

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<sup>176</sup> William Shakespeare, "King Lear," in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Suzanne Gossett, Jean E. Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus, and Gordon McMullan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 2.4.147-8.

“unnecessary” no matter how great his legacy? This thesis makes room for studies that address these questions.

The relationship among gender, age, and power is dynamic, not only for Elizabeth, Hal, and Lear, but for all rulers—dramatic, historical, and contemporary. Old age has always been perceived differently in women than in men, and it is important to think about the ways in which powerful women find ways to embrace the aging process rather than let it detract from their authority. For now, however, I will leave you where we began: with the dying Elizabeth. Lying on a pile of cushions on the floor, ordering lords about her chamber, scolding Sir Robert Cecil for telling her that she “must” go to bed. Elizabeth made death as powerful as she had made life.

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