“A THING ONE KNOWS NOT HOW TO NAME:” THE FEMALE GROTESQUE IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH DRAMA

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Ayşem Seval

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CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Ayşem Seval
PLACE OF BIRTH: İstanbul, Turkey
DATE OF BIRTH: 9 August 1976

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:
Boğaziçi University.
Bristol University.
Boğaziçi University.

DEGREES AWARDED:
Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature, 2008, Boğaziçi University.
Master of Arts in Shakespeare: Text, Influence and Creativity, 2000, Bristol University.
Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, 1999, Boğaziçi University.

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:
Elizabethan and Jacobean drama and gender studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
Research Assistant, Department of English Language and Literature, Istanbul Kültür University, 2000-2002.
Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, Istanbul Kültür University, 2002-2008.

PUBLICATIONS:
Seval, Ayşem. "'I am not That I Play:' Cross-dressing As a Means of Disrupting Sexual Identity in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*." Master's Thesis, Bristol University, 2000.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: THE THEORY OF THE GROTESQUE

Since its first use in the Renaissance, the grotesque has become quite a flexible term. Not having remained limited to the realm of painting, the term "grotesque" soon began to be applied to different aspects of art and used to describe certain moods, behaviours and situations in society as well as the representation of such moods in art and literature. It remained fluid and diverse until it was set down as an aesthetic theory in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Whether it serves as a more general term or an aesthetic category, there are two main trends in the reception of the grotesque. The first one is the form of grotesque set down by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* and the second one is traced throughout the centuries by Wolfgang Kayser in *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*. However, before explaining these categories in further detail, the origins of the concept need to be analysed.

First used in the late fifteenth century to describe certain ornamental decorations discovered during the excavations of Nero's Domus Aurea in Rome, the term grotesque is derived from the Italian word *grotta* (cave). It is a fanciful decorative style in which different anatomies intermingle with each other. Human torsos were finished off with animal heads or roots and leaves would shoot out from animal bodies. In other words, the borders between human, animal and plant would become inseparable. This decorative style was imported from elsewhere and soon became fashionable in Rome at the beginning of the Christian era.[1] Similarly, soon after its rediscovery in the late fifteenth century, this style was adopted by Renaissance artists such as Pinturicchio and Raphael. Although it was a very popular playful style, it was condemned by many critics both ancient and Renaissance alike. For instance,

[1] For a detailed explanation on the origins of the word see Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, trans. Ulrich Weisstein (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968) 18-28, Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 31-32.

Renaissance critic Vasari refers to the following quotation form Vitruvius' *De Architectura* (ca.27 B.C.) while criticising the newly fashionable design:

> All these motifs taken from reality are now rejected by an unreasonable fashion. For our contemporary artists decorate the walls with monstrous forms rather than reproducing clear images of the familiar world […] (qtd. in Kayser 20)

Vitruvius' criticism hints as to why this form became so popular and at the same time so hated. It is visually attractive because it plays with the usual motifs in a novel way, intertwining different species and rendering their borders fluid but this is at the same time disturbing as it turns the familiar into the unfamiliar. These objects are familiar enough to be acknowledged as ourselves and yet not clearly distinguished from one another as to be a separate entity. Thus, the ambivalence renders the concept of grotesque simultaneously attractive and repellent. The grotesque is the distorted image of the well known. It deploys the familiar world or the 'natural' order only to subvert it by suspending and/or inverting all its rules.

Over the centuries, the grotesque has developed from an ornamental style into a theoretical understanding. The word grotesque became detached from the context of an ornamental style and began to be applied — sometimes figuratively and sometimes more physically — to other objects, concepts and even situations.[2] In spite of the various shades of the term adopted in different centuries, both concepts of the grotesque argued by Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser emerge from the above-mentioned concept of ambivalence but eventually turn into two very different notions.

The first aspect of the grotesque theorised by Bakhtin is the festive face of the grotesque. It is derived from the gay and playful atmosphere of the medieval carnival and is

[2] Kayser traces not only the concept of grotesque in art history but also the etymology of the word. He explains how the word grotesque—besides its connotations of bizarre, fantastic, and extravagant—was associated with satire and acted as a synonym of ridicule, comique and burlesque once it becomes detached from its "physical context of the grotto" in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Kayser 26). Bakhtin also refers to this process and claims that when grotesque became a literary genre, it lost its touch with folk humour and lost its generative power; moreover, it lost its bodily character and became abstract (Bakhtin 34).

dominated by the "images of the material bodily principle"[3] that have their roots in folk humour. According to Bakhtin, these images are derived from a "peculiar aesthetic concept" which he calls "grotesque realism."[4] Grotesque realism is tightly related to the earth and the physical world and associated simultaneously with death and birth, change and renewal, fertility and growth. The physicality of this type of grotesque refers to a constant process of becoming and as Bakhtin claims:

> [It] is offered in its all-popular festive and utopian aspect […] In grotesque realism, therefore, the bodily element is deeply positive. (19)

Grotesque realism concerns itself with the lower bodily stratum[5] in order to degrade "all that is high, spiritual, ideal, [and] abstract […]" (Bakhtin 19). However, degradation - in no way a negative or destructive concept for Bakhtin - means bringing down to earth, burying and killing an object or a concept "in order to bring forth something more and better." According to Bakhtin, "grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving." (21)

It has already been mentioned that concepts of grotesque emerge from ambivalence. In the festive type, the grotesque images are ambivalent in the sense that they are "unfinished," open to the interaction with other bodies and creatures in the world and they are in a constant process of becoming. In other words, they are the opposite of classic aesthetics. As Bakhtin suggests:

> The grotesque images are ambivalent, contradictory; they are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of 'classic' aesthetics, that is the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed […] their traditional contents: copulation, pregnancy, birth, growth, old age, disintegration, dismemberment…are contrary to the classic images of the finished, completed man, cleansed, as it were, of all the scoriae of birth and development […] (25)

[3] These are the images of the human body with its relation to food, drink, defecation, and sexual life.
[4] The grotesque realism refers to the aesthetic concept derived from folk culture. According to Bakhtin, it is manifested in the imagery of the works of Rebelais and many other writers of the Renaissance, such as Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and Cervantes (Bakhtin 18).
[5] That is the lower part of the human body with emphasis on the belly, bowels, anus and the genitals.

In this type of grotesque, ambivalence is very positive. The grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world as a closed off unit. It transgresses its own limits; thus, it inverts and negates the ideal image of man as well as established social institutions and official discourses but at the same time it revives and renews something better out of all these. This is also the most important characteristic that is adopted by the feminist critics when they argue the concept of the female grotesque. As the ambivalence of the grotesque images offer a chance for inversion of the established rules, the grotesqueness of the female body is not something negatively degrading but it can indeed be a form of power for women. This point will be taken up later within the context of the feminist critics and the concept of the female grotesque.

In the festive grotesque, as suggested by Bakhtin, the representation of the grotesque body deriving from the carnival and folk humour is extremely different from that which the classical and medieval canons represent. In the 'classic' representations, the body is a closed unit that completed its development and reached its maturity. All the aspects, which point towards the unfinished nature of the body such as childbirth, old age, and death pangs, are carefully excised, as they are not fit for representation. The borders of the classic body are clearly demarcated and carefully separated from other bodies. The classic body is represented as fully-grown, decorous, and isolated self. Thus, the body that is represented by the "grotesque realism"[6] is deformed and monstrous as it did not comply with such norms. It underlies the continuously growing and unstable aspects of the body like the process of eating, defecation, illness, decaying old age etc., and situations in which the borders of the self are blurred as one body is represented in interaction with other bodies—living and sometimes non-living (conception, child birth, and even death).

[6] Bakhtin suggests that the "images of the material bodily principle" in the works of Rebelais and many other writers of the Renaissance, such as Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and Cervantes have their roots in folk humour. He refers to the aesthetic concept of the Renaissance, from which these images are derived, as "grotesque realism." (Rabelais 18)

The fluid borders of the self are not something negative though. Fluidity does not bring a sense of estrangement; on the contrary, it suggests unison with the world and with other selves. However, in the second type of grotesque—namely the uncanny grotesque explained by Kayser—the shattered borders of the self have an annihilating effect. At this point, the idea of the 'uncanny'[7] suggested by Freud may cast light on the type of grotesque that Kayser argues.

Freud, in his essay "The Uncanny,"[8] neither uses the word grotesque nor relates the concept of the uncanny to the grotesque. However, his ideas on the uncanny formed some of the basic arguments in later discussions of the grotesque. Freud argues that the 'uncanny'[9] is obviously related to what is frightening; however, we do not term everything that incites fear as 'uncanny.' He sets out to find out the "common core" in things that are categorised as 'uncanny' (Freud 219).[10] According to Freud, "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (220). In other words, it is the surfacing of our instincts and beliefs, which have been repressed or surmounted. Certain things that are associated with these impulses or that trigger them are regarded as uncanny. They were once comforting and assuring but became threatening and uncanny once repressed or surmounted. For instance, the idea of the double in which the self is "identified, divided or interchanged" (Freud 234) with another subject is often considered to be uncanny. Freud

[7] One can approach the female grotesque from a psychoanalytic point of view not only using Freud's argument of the "uncanny" but also Kristeva's notion of the "abject." However, this dissertation is interested in the cultural and material conditions of the early modern age that shape the concept of the female grotesque and in return the concept's influence on these conditions. Thus, a psychoanalytic interpretation would be beyond the scope of this study. I use Freud's "uncanny" simply to elaborate on Kayser's approach to the grotesque.

[8] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955) vol. 17, 219-253.

[9] The word Freud uses is "das unheimliche." As there is no exact equivalent of the word, it is translated as the uncanny. "Unheimlich" means unhomely that which is the opposite of "homely;" in other words, the opposite of what is familiar. Thus, we may think that uncanny is frightening because it is new and unfamiliar, but he immediately concludes that not everything new and unfamiliar is frightening.

[10] Freud theorises on the concept of the uncanny with the help of literary examples. Among the manifestations of the uncanny he uses are the situations in which one suspects the life of an animate being or doubts whether a nonliving thing is alive (226), the eerie feeling we get from doubles and recurrent instances (234) etc. Please note that these situations are taken up by Kayser in his discussion of the grotesque.

points out that the doubling used to serve as a defence mechanism against death and extinction. According to Freud, 'doubling' is associated with:

> the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death. (235)

Freud's explanation of the 'unheimlich' marks the association between the uncanny and the grotesque—even the characteristics inherent in the festive grotesque. In either case, what is once familiar becomes estranged and the ambivalent situation blurs the limits of the ego; hence, the limits of the self as a closed-off unit. According to Freud, once someone appears as a 'fully-developed' subject, anything that surfaces the surmounted instincts and suggests "a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people" (236) becomes threatening and evokes the feeling of the uncanny.

The second type of grotesque, theorised by Wolfgang Kayser in *Grotesque in Art and Literature*, is laden with the feeling of the uncanny. It is ominous and sinister. The grotesque image is achieved by turning ordinary objects and living beings into unfamiliar creatures. It is the estranged world. Kayser claims that:

> By the word *grottesco* the Renaissance […] understood not only something playfully gay and carelessly fantastic, but also something ominous and sinister in the face of a world totally different from the familiar one—a world in which the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and human beings, and where the laws of statistics, symmetry, and proportion are no longer valid. (21)

As it can be deduced from this definition, this type of grotesque also dwells on ambivalence, and the inversion of established rules and 'natural' categories. However, the emerging effect is not one of utopian unity and regeneration but that of estrangement and further isolation.[11]

[11] Bakhtin finds this notion in Kayser's theory as limiting and slightly anachronistic as he thinks this type of grotesque emerged much later than the Renaissance—in the nineteenth century. However, Kayser's examples from Renaissance painters such as Dürer, Bosch and both the Bruegels obviously contain that ominous and uncanny characteristic.

This type of grotesque is both ridiculous and terrifying. The grotesque imagery becomes ridiculously absurd as it involves exaggeration, multiplication and/or deformation of petty details and organs of creatures. At the same time it is terrifying because it disturbs the limits of identity and borders of the familiar world. According to Kayser,

> The basic feeling…is one of surprise and horror, an agonizing fear in the presence of a world which breaks apart and remains inaccessible [… however; this] grotesque world is—and is not—our own world. The ambiguous way in which we are affected by it results from our awareness that the familiar and apparently harmonious world is alienated […] (31, 37)

Thus, grotesque is connected with the uncanny as it reminds us that all the things we think we know, including ourselves, have the potential to become distorted as such and it gives the feeling of "unheimlich" because it underlines the precariousness of our familiar world. In relation to this concept, Kayser asks the question: "who effects the estrangement of the world" and answers that this question remains unanswered because "if we were able to name these powers and relate them to the cosmic order, the grotesque would lose its essential quality […] what intrudes remains incomprehensible, inexplicable, and impersonal"[12] (185). He also points out that we should not interpret this type of grotesque allegorically because it does not have the "intention of teaching, warning or arousing our compassion but solely […of portraying] the inexplicable, incomprehensible, ridiculous and horrible" (Kayser 35).

Dissociating grotesque from allegory, Kayser establishes a connection between the grotesque and satire. Unlike Bakhtin who sees satire as diminishing the effect of grotesque by exploiting it only to ridicule the 'inappropriate,' Kayser thinks that satire "has much in common with the grotesque and may even help to pave the way for it […even though he is aware of the fact that] the grotesque is clearly distinguished from the humorous caricature and the topical satire" (37). Thus, the main difference between Bakhtin and Kayser in this issue is

[12] This is again a major distinction between Bakhtin and Kayser, hence between the two concepts of the grotesque. In Kayser, the grotesque is a hint at the alterity which remains unreachable whereas in Bakhtin the grotesque is the human body itself, it is both a part of the cosmic order and acts as the active agent that determines and alters that order.

that the former sees satire deploying the grotesque as an instrument while for the latter; satire is one of the ways that lead to the grotesque effect.

One final and very important point discussed in *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* is how the grotesque is context-bound. According to Kayser, "the grotesque is experienced in the act of reception" (181). He claims that on the one hand, "physical ugliness and deformity are not enough by themselves" to form the grotesque; on the other, we may call things grotesque even though there is no structural anomaly. As this concept is very important, it will be taken up later in the discussion of the reception of the female body as grotesque. It seems appropriate, at this point, to examine the way in which grotesque is absorbed into feminist discourses so that the complexity of the female grotesque in the Renaissance becomes clearer.

Many feminist critics,[13] such as Mary Russo, have incorporated both discourses of the grotesque to their discussion of feminism. The ambivalence of both types of grotesque forms the backbone of their argument. They claim that patriarchal discourses always associated the woman and the female body with the concept of the grotesque as a demeaning factor.[14] Mary Russo opens *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* by explaining how the word grotesque comes from the grotto or the cave and hence as a "bodily metaphor the grotesque cave tends to look like…the cavernous anatomical female body."[15] This has sometimes been

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13 For critics other than Russo who directly or indirectly deploy the grotesque, see Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1 (1976): 875-893. Cixous uses one of the archaic tropes of the female grotesque, the gorgon Medusa—the demonised woman—as a metaphor of feminist liberation. Similarly, Rosi Braidotti in "Mothers, Monsters and Machines," *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminst Theory*, eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 59-79 traces the historical and medical association of maternal body with the monstrous and suggests that the blended reaction of fascination and horror that we feel for monsters is close to the one we feel for the female body and points out how this can serve as an opportunity for reconsidering sexual differences and for "[…] negotiating new boundaries for female identity[…]" (Braidotti 77). Elizabeth Grosz in a more general article on the grotesque the "Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit" *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996) 55-81 argues how the ambiguity of the grotesque double in Siamese twins is actually not something terrible as many people think and how indeed the twins challenge the "corporeal limits of subjectivity [by…] occupying the impossible middle ground between the oppositions dividing the human from the animal, one being from the other, natural from cultural, one sex from another […]" (Grosz 55,57).

14 We have discussed how the grotesque is associated with the "low," unserious burlesque at best and the hideous and monstrous at worst in the mainstream patriarchal discourses such as the classical aesthetics and the classical canon.

15 Mary Russo *Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 1.

associated with the positive and powerful female figure—for instance with that of the earth mother—however, according to Russo, one can immediately slip from these "archaic tropes to the misogyny that associates the cave-like inner space with the visceral"(2). Russo moves on from the point that the visceral and all the functions related to it are reduced to the "cave of abjection" in modernity; however, she emphasises the fact that this is not a "natural or elemental phenomenon" but a culture-specific one. She points out how, starting from the first appearance of the form in classical antiquity, the term grotesque has come to be known as what is against the concept of the 'natural' and against classical art and considered to be a trivial or low form as opposed to more 'serious' art work. Thus, Russo infers that grotesque emerged "only in relation to the norms which it exceeded" (3)–hence, constantly transgressive—but it is also constantly trivialized and pushed down the margins by the normative aesthetics.[16] Russo suggests that this trivialized and marginalized nature of the grotesque is "suggestive of a certain construction of the feminine" (5). Thus, interestingly the female figure is associated both with the depth of the inner space of the "grotto-esque" and with its trivialized aspect of the surface space. Both images were negative according to Russo; however, I think it can be argued that this double characteristic of the grotesque attributed to the female body does actually serve as an alternative composite space, highly ambivalent and potent.

Mary Russo also talks about an alternative space by claiming that some women take risks by 'choosing' to be grotesque.[17] She associates grotesque with risk and sees risk as "not a bad thing to be avoided, but rather, a condition of possibility […]" and argues that risk belongs to the discourse of probability and 'error.' The female grotesque in Russo's discussion represents this space of wilful erring from the normalizing processes in order to question the very processes themselves. It includes the errors of "losing one's femininity,

[16] Grotesque ornamentation is literally a marginal decoration in the sense that it was used to decorate the title pages and the margins of various works of literature.
[17] As I explained above, I think the composite character of the female grotesque itself creates an alternative space whether one willingly embraces it or not.

making a spectacle of oneself, alienating men (meaning powerful men) or otherwise making 'errors'" Russo 12). These errors are quite easy to commit—willingly or not—as any given woman can be accused of one or more of such errors at any given time. Moreover, women do not need to be physically deformed to be labelled as grotesque. Certain physical processes and body parts are often potentially grotesque. Russo lists some of these as such: "illness, aging, reproduction, nonreproduction, secretions, lumps, bloating, wigs, scars, make-up and prostheses" (14).

In relation to the idea of wilful erring, Russo discusses a concept that she calls the "aerial sublime." It refers to the show carried out by female trapeze artists and female stunt pilots; thus a specific reference in which women become spectacles in a carefully arranged show. For Russo, it is "the embodiment of possibility and of error" (29). She thinks the "*general grotesque* leaves a static and universalistic notion of the feminine securely in place" (Russo 29) and offers the "aerial sublime" as an alternative to the identification of the grotesque with the low. She claims the emphasis on aeriality, rather than the earthliness suggested by Bakhtinian "*general grotesque,*" brings the possibilities of reconfiguring a space for the woman and points out to an alternative to the concept of liberation as "upward mobility."[18]

Russo claims that there is a "historical chasm" between the way in which modernity represents grotesque and the earlier identifications of the concept with the "low" (29). Her claim reduces the reading of the grotesque to its narrow aspect as burlesque—that which degrades high concepts to unseriously and negatively low ones for satirical purposes. We have seen that Bakhtin avoids this limited reading and emphasises the multi-layered concept of degradation suggested by the concept of the grotesque. By trying to posit the "aerial sublime" as a better alternative to what she calls the "general grotesque," Russo is basing her

[18] Russo thinks many liberationist movements are nothing but the attempt to prove the normalcy of woman and to elevate her up in the social ladder. According to Russo, this attempt is nothing but the perpetuation of patriarchal discourses. However, I would like to point out that she herself is taking the aerial and the vertical—phallic maybe—as the standard or positive goal aimed at.

argument on the dichotomy established by the classical aesthetics. Thus, she falls into the trap that considers the grotesque capable of transgression, and thus worth dealing with, only if it is related to or suggestive of something higher and more serious.[19] So, if there is a "historical chasm" between Russo's understanding of grotesque and the early modern concept of grotesque outlined by Bakhtin, I think it is to the benefit of the latter. As previously pointed out, Bakhtinian grotesque approaches degradation in quite a positive sense. In this form, the low and the degraded object has the opportunity to "transgress not only its quantitative but also its qualitative limits, [to] outgrow itself and be fused with other objects." (Bakhtin 308).

In spite of her arguments on "historical chasms," Mary Russo claims she is focusing specifically on Modernity and the way in which grotesquery enables a space for women in the twentieth century to consciously transgress the norms by making a spectacle of themselves. Moreover, she admits that:

> The fantasies, dreams and visions of liberation are very different in contexts other than one [she is] describing as problematical in relation to the discourses of modernity in the West (Russo 13-14)

However, she also claims "within the expanded spatial dimensions of the late twentieth century spectacle, the female spectacle which *emerges* as a de-formation of the normal suggests new political aggregates" (Russo 16, my emphasis). In other words, according to Russo the female spectacle did not 'emerge,' or come to light as a challenge to the norm before the twentieth century. Hence, her discussion implies that not until the twentieth century are there serious attempts to convey the ambivalent and complex 'nature' of the female body politics.

Indeed she refers to Natalie Zemon Davis' chapter on early modern women[20] in which Davis argued that the image of the disorderly and carnivalesque woman "undermined as well

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[19] Bakhtin sees this kind of perspective as descending from "narrow artistic and ideological norms" (Bakhtin 308) of the idealistic aesthetics of the nineteenth century which sees grotesque as an instrument to satirise the improper.

[20] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top" in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987) 124-151.

as reinforced" not only the misogynist stereotypes but also the existing social structures and illustrates her point with numerous historical cases of disturbances in which women are involved or indeed acted as central figures (grain, enclosure and tax riots, religious sectarianism and even the Civil War). Russo takes up Davis' argument only to dismiss it immediately by arguing that these are not the history of women's liberation movements but the history of popular movements which "has been largely the history of men" (59).

The counter-argument that Russo brings is nothing but judging the Early Modern period through the lenses of the concepts and the standards of the modern age. Moreover, she places all women of the previous ages into one category and constantly falls back on the one-dimensional and stereotypical iconography about women and female body while referring to them. Hence, on the one hand Russo is claiming that women are constantly degraded with the age-old misogynistic discourses; on the other, she is prolonging these discourses by giving them factual credit.

At this point, I would like to point out that I am not aiming to debunk the feminist idea of the grotesque or posit an anti-feminist stand. I am criticising some of the feminist generalisations about women that seem to be too sweeping and passing judgements about women regardless of their cultural and historical contexts. Thus, I agree with Russo that "the bold affirmations of feminine performance, imposture, and masquerade […] have suggested cultural politics for women" (54). What I aim to argue is that the figure of the female grotesque that aims at this "cultural politics" is present not just in the works of the twentieth century female writers – as Russo and some other feminist theoreticians claim - but also in the so-called male dominated genre of the Renaissance drama.

The Renaissance dramatists, of course, are neither proto-feminists nor conscious advocates of strong women. They use the female grotesque as a spectacle to appeal to the sense of wonder in the audience and hence to increase their profit. Yet, the presentation of the female grotesque on stage does nevertheless seem to open possibilities for either playful or

more serious kinds of inversion as it simultaneously exploits and challenges the simplified one-dimensional misogynist myth of the feminine by presenting a highly complex image. The use of the female grotesque in Renaissance drama does not function solely to portray women as the comic or terrifying margin but also to undermine the simplistic image of the woman as the fool or the incarnation of the devil. Thus, by focusing on the early modern English drama, a heavily male genre, this dissertation aims to point out how the so-called misogyny is more complicated than what the feminist critics assume. The grotesque images of women presented on Tudor and Stuart stages are often ambivalent representations that challenge the patriarchal discourses about female grotesque while seemingly reaffirming them.

Before moving on to discuss the female grotesque in Renaissance drama, I would like to focus on the grotesque tradition in Elizabethan literature that influenced the Renaissance playwrights. It seems to me that the Renaissance grotesque in general and the grotesque representations of women in particular are neither solely utopian as Bakhtin suggests nor purely sinister and annihilating as Kayser explains. What makes Renaissance grotesque fascinatingly complex is that it merges the two aspects of the grotesque, and has the ability to hold these two seemingly contradictory concepts together within its 'nature.' Following Raymond Williams' idea of the residual and emergent forces,[21] one can say that in the Renaissance grotesque, the medieval carnivalesque concept of the festive grotesque exists together with the satirical and sinister forms of grotesque that will be prevalent in the eighteenth century and the following Romantic Age. This point becomes clearer with a closer look at the grotesque tradition in Renaissance literature.

The grotesque tradition in Renaissance England is carefully outlined by Neil Rhodes in his *Elizabethan Grotesque*.[22] Rhodes explains how the grotesque became a fashionable genre in 1590s Britain with Thomas Nashe's comic prose influenced by Italian writer Aretino.

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21 For a definition of "residual" and "emergent" see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) 121-127.

22 Neil Rhodes, *Elizabethan Grotesque* (London: Routledge, 1980).

Rhodes also discusses the further deployments of the grotesque in Elizabethan pamphlet literature, especially in the controversy between Martin Marprelate—a pseudonym for a Puritan writer or writers attacking episcopacy—and anti-marprelate pamphleteers answering him. Having set this background, Rhodes moves on to point out how all these influenced the use of grotesque in the works of Renaissance playwrights such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Dekker.

In his discussion, Rhodes points out the striking relationship and tension between sermon and festive comedy inherent in Elizabethan grotesque. According to Rhodes, Elizabethan grotesque is:

> […] the product of an uneasy relationship between sermon and festive comedy, priest and clown. It is this uncertainty of tone […] which creates a grotesque vision of the physical life of the community. The Elizabethan grotesque derives from the unstable coalescence of contrary images of the flesh: indulged, abused, purged and damned. (4)

Thus, unlike Bakhtin who condemns satirical use of the grotesque and Kayser who rejects its moralistic aspect, Rhodes does not see the two categories as mutually exclusive with the concept of the grotesque and sees a moralistic side in some forms of Elizabethan grotesque. Rhodes claims that Rabelais' festive grotesque of the country-side turns into didactic satire in "the metropolis of Elizabethan London" (16); nevertheless, he also claims that one can still find "rituals of holiday" in the borders of the city. He points out how satire and saturnalia are intertwined in the grotesque of the Renaissance England. Grotesque imagery, satirical or otherwise, often plays on the notion of carnival and Lent—and its derivations of fat and lean, meat and fish, rich and poor. These images do emphasise the physicality of the concept of grotesque. Elizabethan grotesque is interested in the body and the disintegration of its organic unity (losing its mass by melting lard, sweating or urinating), and the image of becoming fluid. These may be directed to two opposite directions: they can be presented in both festive, in which the disintegration is a life-giving source (fat or sweat watering the earth), increasing

fertility and indicating abundance or in decadent terms in which the bodily melting down is indicative of corruption, disease and decay.

Apart from the satirical and/or festive aspects, Elizabethan grotesque can also be quite sinister and ominous, reaching the borders of the uncanny. In such imagery, what is comically mundane becomes bizarre. For instance, items from the grocery shop or the oyster shop may form the organs of a creature; or human bones and mutilated body parts may form a ship. We also see the exaggeration of "repulsive minutae to the realm of the absurd" (Rhodes 30). For instance Nashe talks about "a beard like a Crow with two or three durtie straws in her mouth, going to build her neast" (qtd. in Rhodes 30). According to Rhodes, grotesque imagery in Elizabethan drama is:

> […] a living language of abuse, and a literary one: living, because the folk culture which nourished this kind of physical invective had not entirely disappeared by the late sixteenth century, and literary because [its] power depends upon the inventiveness of the [creator …] (68)

Rhodes explains in detail how such imagery and "the comic grotesque treatment of violence and suffering" (66) did not seem to disturb the Elizabethan taste and how the Nashean style soon was adopted by the Renaissance playwrights. Accordingly, the rest of this dissertation discusses the use of grotesque imagery in Renaissance plays. The chapters take on a cultural materialist stand first focusing on the social, political and material issues to build up the historical context; then moving on to the discussion of grotesque imagery and female representations in the chosen plays.

Chapter one sets a historical background to the female grotesque first by discussing early modern ideas about monsters and the impact of sixteenth and seventeenth century understanding of curiosity in the transformation of monsters from religious warnings to entertaining spectacles. In doing so, it is aimed to point out how, like the concept of the grotesque the 'monstrous' also involves blurring of boundaries, transgression of normative categories and threatening of identities. The chapter moves on to illustrate the early modern

connection between monsters and women by focusing on the female anatomy as well as the reception, representation, and regulation of female curiosity, which was regarded as dangerously transgressive. The final part of the chapter accounts for female transgression both on a discursive and active level. On the discursive level, the focus is on the early modern debate on women and the defences written by women as answer to misogynist arguments; on the active level of female transgression, it is on how the women were involved in riots of various kinds and contributed to the voicing of discontent from the existing order.

Having laid out the historical overview to women's association with the grotesque in chapter one, chapters two and three take up some of the most common female grotesque figures, the witch and the Amazon respectively, and discuss the historical, social, and political implications of these figures as well as their representations on the early modern stage.

First part of chapter two deals with questions such as "what does witchcraft mean" and "who is a witch" by pointing out how the social dynamics of witchcraft beliefs and the social profile of the early modern witch emerged from a highly complicated network of power relations. It also discusses how this profile may suggest empowerment for some women. In addition, it claims that witches and witchcraft cases were an integral part of the Renaissance grotesque as they displayed the main attributes of the concept of the grotesque. While the carefully arranged charade of the witchcraft accusations and trials appealed to the sense of wonder and spectacle in people, characteristics of the stereotypical witch descriptions drew a grotesque image. These descriptions presented the witch as extremely ugly, deformed and crooked as well as having a boundless body which can be extended to intrude boundaries of houses or even others' bodies. In other words, the witch existed as a grotesque threat to the clean, healthy, and intact self. Her deformed, open and fluid body is imagined to be in constant flux and interacting with other bodies.

Following the discussions of how the fantasies surrounding the grotesque and boundless body of the witch and her marginal position in village community may have acted as a source of empowerment for some women, the second part of the chapter focuses on two Jacobean witchcraft plays in order to illustrate how this possibility might be utilized in Renaissance theatre. William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* brings on stage fictional witches while William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* is based on an actual witchcraft case. Whether fictional or topical, the witch on stage was a highly marketable spectacle with her uncannily ambiguous appearance, highly dubious relationship with familiars and remarkably grotesque witchcraft practices. Even though they exploited stereotypical attributes of witches, some plays seem to be dwelling more on the ambiguous social status of the witch and portray quite powerful characters on the stage.

The third chapter looks at how one of the most common early modern female grotesque figures—the female warrior and/or the Amazon—is represented in plays that reread/recreate the events of a past age and how these representations reflect back on the contemporary politics of the era in which the plays were written. By focusing on plays from the Elizabethan and the Jacobean era, the chapter points out the relationship between politics and the female grotesque. I am interested in what these grotesque female representations would signify in Elizabethan England, and what they would signify in Jacobean England both in relation to the cultural and political climate of the ages and to the gender of the respective monarchs.

Both in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature the image of the fighting and ruling woman would be charged with ideological and iconographic significance. Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays deployed, the fighting women of the past age—namely Joan of Arc and Margaret— as a tool for political commentary. Similarly, in Dekker's allegorical play, *The Whore of Babylon*, Queen Elizabeth is mythified to suit the Jacobean political agenda.

The grotesque image of the fighting woman is double edged. On the one hand, there is the cross-dressed, Christian virgin fighting like a knight for patriarchal values such as

patriotism and religion; on the other, there is the sexually promiscuous and brutal pagan warrior living and fighting according to matriarchal codes. Both images are highly grotesque since they are sexually as well as politically transgressive. Accordingly, characters who take on either of these images can be assumed to possess a demonized femininity and labelled as grotesque monsters, witches or Amazons.

The chosen plays illustrate how highly powerful women become marginalised and/or mythified grotesque figures not because they threaten to subvert patriarchal politics but because they are more skilful politicians than their male counterparts. Moreover, we see that these women willingly adopt the grotesque image to become active agents in politics rather than remain passive and submissive figures.

From quasi-supernatural and semi-mythical representations of the female grotesque, chapter four turns to more local and domestic representations. The grotesque women represented in plays of this chapter had a stinging closeness to the London theatre-going public as they are the women of city comedies.

The last chapter discusses the material conditions in which city comedy developed and by focusing on three city comedies—namely Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene* and Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*— it aims to analyse the nature of the Renaissance market, the effect of rising commodity culture in refashioning identities, the transformation of socio-sexual relationships as a result of the passing from a feudal society to a capitalist one and the meaning of all these changes in terms of the concept of the grotesque in general and female grotesque in particular.

While *Bartholomew Fair* presents a composite festive and commercial image of the Renaissance market and the female grotesque in this market, *Epicoene*, *or the Silent Woman* adopts carnivalesque capitalism to point out how the male-female sexual and reproductive relations are transformed in nascent capitalist social order. And finally the last chapter discusses another seventeenth-century city comedy that deals with female grotesquery. By

using the openly cross-dressed heroine of Middleton and Dekker's topical play, *The Roaring Girl,* I aimed to point out how the self-embraced grotesquery and masquerade may indeed provide an alternative space for women.

CHAPTER II

"MONSTER OF NATURE:" EARLY MODERN IDEAS ON MONSTERS, WOMEN AND CURIOSITY

Barbara Benedict suggests that a person or an object is classified as 'monstrous' if it has "violated its boundaries and become something that conventional society deems useless, excessive, even dangerous to humanity itself." [23] Just like the concept of the grotesque, the 'monstrous' also involves blurring of boundaries, transgression of normative categories and threatening of identities. This part will first focus on the early modern approaches to monsters and the impact of sixteenth and seventeenth century understanding of curiosity in the transformation of monsters from warnings to shows.[24] Having done that, it will then illustrate the connection between monsters and women.

Monsters and prodigies have always been an area of interest in both popular and learned discussions of the classical antiquity and the Middle Ages.[25] Similarly, in the early modern period, the superstitious type of monster tales that are derived from folklore and mythological stories went hand in hand with the attempt to create a more scientific discourse on monsters.[26] Both attitudes considered monsters and other marvels as anomalies, deviations from the norm, aberrations that nature has created. However in the Renaissance, the reason for this aberration

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23 Barbara M. Benedict, *Curiosity: A Cultural History of Early Modern Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) 5.

24 The etymology for the word monster is sometimes traced back to *monstrare*, "to show," sometimes to *monore*, "to warn" thus monsters were sometimes considered as portentous signs of existent sin or evil in the precinct or an ominous future event to come; and sometimes they are treated as curious occurrences to be displayed. For the etymology of the word see Benedict 6.

25 The philosophers from Aristotle to St. Augustine included monsters in their discussions. They were also among the topics of ancient and medieval anatomy and medicine. At the same time monsters are among the indispensable topics of ancient and medieval literature. They are abundant in mythological tales and chivalric romances. For the philosophical origins of discourses on monsters see Zakiyah Hanafi *The Monster in the Machine: Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000) 1-15.

26 Hanafi explains how monsters by definition pointed to "pollution, transgression, a breakdown in social order; and by bearing a sign of warning from the forces of the sacred" and how science was called to restore order "by coming up with precise names for each deformity, by setting up an immense lexical apparatus, an iron-clad taxonomy based on rules and laws of corporeal organization […] In this distancing through language, especially by using the scholarly, authoritative language of Latin, we can see how transparent modern medicine's efforts have been to grant normalcy to something that obviously resists classification" (Hanafi 3-4).

gradually shifted from a religious portent designating God's wrath to more "scientific" explanations such as foetal and natal anomalies.[27]

For instance, while Ambroise Paré, in *On Monsters and Marvels*,[28] accounts for marine monsters, animal and human hybrids, snake-haired monsters in eggs; Michel de Montaigne begins his detailed account of "a monstrous child" who has a parasitic double with the claim that it is a case for the physician to treat. He finishes this essay with the warning against superstitious beliefs in portents:

> *'That which he often seeth he doth not wonder at, though he know not why it is done; but if that happen which he never saw before, he thinkes it some portentous wonder.'* We call that against nature which commeth against custome.[29]

Montaigne advises his reader to use his reason to get rid of "the astonishment which noveltie breedeth and strangenes causeth in [him]" (Book II, Chapter xxx) and not to take every novelty as some superstitious sign.

Natural philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century show great effort to distinguish their interest in monsters from the more popular interest in hearsay stories of wonders and superstitious beliefs in signs and portents. According to early modern natural philosophers "he who has learned [nature's] deviations will be able more accurately to describe her paths" and "if nature be once seized in her variations, and the cause be manifest, it will be easy to lead her." [30] That is why Francis Bacon, included monsters in his new programme for the study of nature. He claimed that:

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[27] Katherine Park and Lorraine Daston discuss how the shift from "monsters as prodigies to monsters as examples of medical pathology" is associated with the widening gap between the popular and high culture and with the attempt of the "literary elite" to distinguish themselves from the "day labourers" in "Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century France and England," *Past and Present* 92 (1981): 20-54.

[28] Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, translated and edited by Janis L. Pallister (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

[29] Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, "Of a Monstrous Child," Book II Chapter XXX, *Essays* trans. John Florio, *Renascence Editions*, 23 December 2005 < http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/montaigne/index.htm>.

[30] Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum: or the True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature,* 1620 "The First Vintage of the Form of Heat" aphorism XXIX, *The Online Library of Liberty*, 23 December 2005 <http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/HTML.php?recordID=0415> .

> […] a compilation, or particular natural history, must be made of all monsters and prodigious births of nature; of everything, in short, which is new, rare and unusual in nature. (xxix)

Thus, beginning with Bacon's *Novum Organum*, and increasing with greater urgency well into the enlightenment, the practice of categorising monsters and prodigies gradually became a branch of science—teratology, the study of monsters. In spite of 'scientific' claims and warnings of "a rigorous selection, so as to be worthy of credit,"[31] teratology was not devoid of popular beliefs as well as political and religious concerns. Hanafi, in *Monster in the Machine*, argues how monster has always been an "'ideological cluster,' an entity constructed and represented within a social group" and suggests that "what constitutes a monster at any given time or place is a contextualised, localized set of characteristics, defined and accepted by the community" (14).

For instance, capitalising on the Christian belief that "prodigies have apocalyptic associations [and that] they presage world reformation, the overthrow of the wicked, and the vindication of God's elect," (Park& Daston 25) both the Catholic and the Protestant reformers utilized tales of marvels and cases of monsters in their propaganda. For instance, in their pamphlet, Martin Luther and Phillip Melanchthon explained two monsters, the "monk-calf" and the "pope-ass" claiming that these monsters were "prodigies prophesying the imminent ruin of the Roman Church."[32] The pamphlet provided woodcuts in the manner of popular broadsides appealing to the unlearned folk together with a seemingly more intellectual account of these marvels hence, catering for both the unlearned and the intellectual interest in monsters. While philosophical works made such use of popular tools, the popular literature also exploited philosophical and scientific texts for profit. Park and Daston discuss how the old and new practices were combined. Old folk tales about monsters would be accompanied

[31] Bacon, aphorism xxix. While Bacon emphasizes rigorous selection, he is rejecting the style that relies on hearsay. For instance, Paré often begins his account by saying so-and-so "writes of having seen," or includes the picture of a monster "…which was sent to [him] by monsieur Bourgeois, doctor of medicine, a very learned man and very experienced in that field…" (Paré 23).

[32] *Deuttung der czwo grewlichen Figuren, Bapstesels czu Rom und Munchkalbs zu Freijberg ijnm Meijszen Funden* 1523 quoted in Park & Daston 26.

by detailed anatomical drawings. Several broadsides and pamphlets borrowed images and plagiarised scientific treatises from the medical texts about birth defects, 'ornamented' them with religious warnings or moral advice and reprinted them as cheap pamphlets meant to 'educate' the reader (Park & Daston 30-32).

Another form of literature that merged the scientific discourses with the fantastical entertainment for pseudo-education was the travel writing or the so-called wonder books. Disguised with geographical, zoological and botanical accounts of the new world, the monsters and prodigies in such literature appear to be less frightening. Instead of being religious portents, they appeared as 'curiosities' that fulfilled the readers' fantasies about remote lands, reassured European identity and legitimised colonisation.

In spite of the rigorous attempts on the part of the natural philosophers to systematise monsters, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a time when literature and spectacle about freaks, monsters and marvels proliferated. While monsters swarmed in travel literature, prodigy books, broadsides, and freak shows crowded the popular entertainments. Siamese twins, dwarfs and giants were granted licences by the Master of the Revels[33] just like the licences granted to public staging of plays. What all these spectacles have in common was that they appeal to the public curiosity and were forms of entertainment. Barbara Benedict argues that "monsters, 'freaks' or 'sports' of nature, [were] simultaneously metaphorical and scientific. However, when disproportionate creatures were 'shown' or demonstrated to an audience, they became the early modern phenomenon of a curiosity" (Benedict 6). Benedict draws a parallelism between these human curiosities and the fetishised objects that appear in the curiosity cabinets of early collectors[34] and argues that all these items have no other function than display. They are there to satisfy the curiosity of the beholder and empower him with the knowledge he possesses. Benedict points out that this curiosity is considered as a

[33] For a detailed discussion about the licensed freaks see Park and Daston 20-22.
[34] Benedict reminds that the curiosity cabinets of early modern connoisseurs are prototypes for museums and while displays on cabinets, carnivals, and fairs promised entertainment, the museum claimed education (Benedict 9).

"cultural ambition" (22-23) to exceed one's role and control society as well as nature. It was a threatening impulse that needs to be controlled and unless channelled to right directions, it could upset social order. Accordingly, in the seventeenth century, curiosity that was "historically conceived as lawless and asocial, [was] newly legitimised as empiricism" (Benedict 27). The so-called disinterested curiosity to understand and master nature to serve the benefit of the state and humanity is a major part of the Baconian programme which will be the dominant scientific thought in the seventeenth and even in the eighteenth century. Moreover, as Benedict points out:

> In the Renaissance, curiosity seemed to yoke individual and state ambitions: As investigation beyond the borders of England, nature, and the visible, curiosity could open terrae incognitae where the explorers became conquerors and their homelands sovereign. (Benedict 27)

This legitimisation of curiosity was one of the reasons for the proliferation of literature on the marvellous, be it about the monsters and marvels of new world or the local freaks and anomalies. In these works, one can see the attempt to be commonsensical and scientific and to appeal sense of wonder in the reader at the same time. What seems to be an attempt to adopt the new empirical fashion is indeed a form of bridling a dangerously transgressive ambition. Benedict argues that depending on his aim, the inquirer can both be a saviour or a monster. Those inquirers at the service of the state were deemed heroes while those who transgress their limits are monsters:

> Just as monstrous bodies combine two species in one, or swell or shrink beyond usual dimensions, people who desire or inquire beyond their place embody ontological uncertainty. Their mobility across species or across social rank is seen as a transgressive sign of their ambition to transcend their place. By identifying ambitious people as monsters, early modern texts co-opt curiosity to support the status quo. (Benedict 33)

Having discussed early modern ideas on monsters and the association of curiosity with monstrosity, it seems appropriate to focus on the female body drawing the associations between monsters and women as well as the reception, representation, and regulation of female curiosity.

In early modern Europe, women were believed to have monstrous anatomies. "Woman is a monster of nature; she is imperfect man, as many Learned writers are pleased to determine, which we may deduce from all her parts"[35] claims the author of *Cefalogia Fisonomica*, a seventeenth-century manual book illustrating the relationship between character and physiognomy.

Those "learned writers" which the manual refers to are the ancient philosophers who form the roots of Renaissance medicine and anatomy. Drawing on classical thinkers and anatomists, Renaissance medicine considered female body as an anomaly, an aberration from the norm—that is the male body. Various early modern anatomy books and medical texts quoted the theories of ancient authorities on sex and reproduction.[36] For instance, Plato considered the womb as an independent animal that can move and smell on its own.[37] Aristotle in *On the Generation of Animals* explains why "one embryo becomes female and another male:"

> For when the first principle does not bear sway and cannot concoct the nourishment through lack of heat nor bring it into its proper form, but is defeated in this respect, then must needs the material which it works on change into its opposite. Now the female is opposite to the male, and that in so far as the one is female and the other male. And since it differs in its faculty, its organ also is different, so that the embryo changes into this state.[38]

In other words, the female sex results when the "first principle" fails to realize its "proper form."[39] As the proper form assumed to be the male, female sex appears to be nothing but a

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35 Quoted in Hanafi 115. Hanafi explains this attitude toward women as such: "Monstrosity, like ugliness, is a lack of proper means and proportions between parts, the principle that define classical notions of beauty" (115) and hence with a narrower head which offers a smaller space for brain, and slender "nervous" limbs, women are the opposite of the classical norm—the man.

36 For further information on how the Renaissance medicine adopted classical arguments on sex see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990).

37 Cited in Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 33.

38 Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, Book IV section 1, *University of Adelaide Library Electronic Texts Collection*, 24 December 2005 < http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/generation/index.html>.

39 Aristotle explain monstrous births in a similar manner as the deficiency in proper concoction of the semen and failure of "the material contributed by the mother" to be controlled by the form giving semen. Book IV, section 3.

monstrous aberration from the norm, an anomaly as a result of a failure. Similarly, Galen considered the female sex as malformed male. Due to lack of heat, women cannot complete their anatomical development to push their sexual organs outward to become men and thus fulfil their "natural course." These ideas continued to be medical facts in the Renaissance. Several anatomy books and medical manuals repeated these ideas and built their anatomical explanations and medical treatments on Aristotle, Galen and other ancient authorities. Ambroise Paré, a sixteenth-century surgeon, includes various accounts of women who have "degenerated" into men in his *On Monsters and Marvels* (1573). He explains the possibility of this 'metamorphosis' as such:

> The reason why women can degenerate into men is because women have as much hidden within the body as men have exposed outside; leaving aside, only, that women don't have so much heat nor the ability to push out what by the coldness of their temperament is held as if bound to the interior […] We therefore never find in any true story that any man ever became a woman, because Nature tends always toward what is most perfect and not, on the contrary, to perform in such a way that what is perfect should become imperfect (Paré 32-33).

Ironically, what is included in his book of monsters is not a deviation from nature, as monsters are considered to be, but a move towards the 'natural,' and in return what is monstrous is the state of ordinary female anatomy.

Cultural implications of this anatomical model suggested that women are always ready to transgress, as their body is anomalous and grotesque in the Bakhtinian sense discussed before—i.e. unlike the classical finished, completed, and regulated male body, the female body is unfinished, open, and secretive. Thus, women need to be controlled and restrained at all times as their body itself is a sign of transgression.

Peter Stallybrass in "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed" traces how the body was "enclosed" in the sixteenth century with the establishment of new rules of propriety that included the cleansing of orifices, the adoption of forks and separate plates as well as proclamations against "the monstrous abuse of apparel almost in all estates but principally in

the meaner sort."[40] According to Stallybrass this "enclosure of the body" aimed to distinguish the social classes from each other but more importantly it "[…] emphasized the borders of a closed individuality" (125).

The early modern enclosure of body was particularly effective on female body. As women's bodies were anatomically grotesque, they needed constant surveillance. It came not only in the form of state surveillance i.e. proclamations and regulations regarding rules such as dress codes but also in more civil forms like the advice books for women and books for the education of daughters. The increasing numbers of works for the creation of 'normative woman' aimed to present perfect emblem of modesty, chastity and silence with a completely enclosed body and passive identity. Stallybrass points out that the enclosure concentrated on the orifices—the mouth and the vagina—of the female body. The legal term to make a "whore of her tongue" illustrates the connection between the two orifices. The conduct books often equated the chastity of the woman with the silence of the tongue. For instance, an early modern writer, Barbaro writes in his *On Wifely Duties*:

> […] Not only the arms but indeed also the speech of women never be made public; for the speech of a noble woman can be no less dangerous than the nakedness of her limbs. (qtd. in Stallybrass 127)

The speech of a woman is dangerous because it is transgressive. A speaking woman is a curious woman and legitimised curiosity was made a male territory in the early modern period. Hence, a speaking woman is impertinently crossing her boundaries and trespassing on the male territory.

Benedict argues that curiosity in its uncontrolled form is often imagined and represented as female by early modern thinkers. She illustrates her point with a woodcut from the early seventeenth century:

> In 1611, Cesare Ripa encapsulated this idea in his image of *Curiosita* as a huge, wild-haired, winged woman, head hungrily alert, arms outflung as

[40] This 1562 proclamation is cited in Peter Stallybrass, "Patriarchal Territories: The Body Enclosed" in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 123-142.

> if to embrace the world. Declaring that "curiosity is the unbridled desire of those who seek to know more than they should" (Benedict 25)

Indeed the association between women and curiosity is not just this emblematized Fury like female figure. Curiosity as female is less dangerous than actual female curiosity which represented the "desire to unsettle the status quo."(Benedict 127) As "idle, ignorant, prurient, useless or even socially destructive," female curiosity became "a rival empiricism that challenges institutionalized curiosity." (Benedict 118,137)

Indeed in spite of the attempts to bridle female speech and enclose her body, the women continued to have voices; "however much the historical records have effaced it" (Stallybrass 141). Early modern women are far more active and vocal than the "normative" female figure that the conduct books tried to promote. Stallybras ends his article by claiming that:

> The female grotesque could, indeed, interrogate class and gender hierarchies alike, subverting the enclosed body in the name of a body that is 'unfinished, outgrows, itself, transgresses its own limits' (142).

The rest of this chapter will pick up the argument from where Stallybrass has left and account for the female transgression both on a discursive and active level. On the active level, I will discuss how the women were involved in riots of different sorts and contributed to the voicing of discontent from the existing order; on the discursive level, I will focus on the early modern debate on women and the defences written by women as answer to misogynist arguments.

Though misogynist discourse dates back to antiquity, starting from 1540s and continuing well until the Civil War several pamphlets attacking and defending women were published in England.[41] Henderson and McManus, in *Half Humankind*, suggest as the reason

[41] One of the first examples of the early modern misogynist pamphlets is the anonymous *Schoolhouse for Women* (1541) and Jane Anger's defence *Her Protection for Women* (1589) forms the framework for the various defences written afterwards. However, the major pamphlet war broke out in 1615 after the publication of Swetnam's *The Arraignment of Lewd, Idle, Forward and Unconstant Women* which drew at least three well known answers in 1617—Rachel Speght's *A Muzzle for Melastomus.*, Ester Sowernam's *Esther Hath Hanged Haman* and Constantia Munda's *The Worming of a Mad Dog*. For further information on the pamphlet attacks

for increase in pamphlets during this period, the wider dissemination of such ideas due to printing press and the increase in interest among the middle-classes to such debates[42] and hence the increase in literature capitalising on this interest.

Early modern misogynist discourses were inherited from classical and Christian antiquity.[43] The creation of Eve and her part in the Fall affirmed not only the inferior carnal aspect of the female body but also the always rebellious, tempting and conniving nature of women. The misogynist view that was supported by medical, religious and legal discourses gave way to the publication of numerous misogynist treatises. The early modern debate about women generated hundreds of misogynist pamphlets together with conduct books and manual guides on the education and control of women's behaviour. Thus, they attempted to create an ideal normative woman, and condemn those who failed to fit in these criteria. However, as early as the fourteenth century, there appeared several works that defended women and some were directly written to answer the misogynist pamphlets. Some of these defences were written by major literary and philosophical figures of the age such as Bocaccio and Erasmus, while others were written by women. Among female defenders, one of the earliest figures in Europe was Christine de Pisan, often considered to be the first feminist.[44] She argued that these misogynist attacks were more about the male fears and weaknesses rather than actualities about women. In *City of Ladies* published in 1405, Pisan suggested the lack of

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and the texts of some of the pamphlets see Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985). All the quotations from the pamphlets are from *Half Humankind* unless otherwise stated.

42 Henderson and McManus, 11-12. Debates about women became the favourite topic of casual talk at bourgeois dinner tables. Ester Sowernam decides to write her defence after a dinner party amongst friends where she thinks "nothing is more usual for table talk there fell out a discourse concerning women" (Henderson and McManus 219).

43 For a survey of the origins of these discourses see Wiesner 15-20 and Henderson and McManus, 4-11.

44 Joan Kelly argues that "Christine de Pisan reached what has come down to us as the first analysis of the sexual bias of culture. From acceptance of women's inferiority, she moved toward a recognition of the man-made, misogynist nature of that claim. Universal as it might seem, the disparagement of women was not validated by her own and other women's experience…The veil of cultural authority fell from her eyes and Christine saw the venerated men of learning not only as human but as male, necessarily viewing women from their own subjective, sexual position." "Early Feminist Theory and the *Quarelle des Femmes*, 1400-1789" *Signs* 8 (1982): 14.

education, economic dependence and subordinate position as the reason of female inferiority in many areas.[45]

In sixteenth and seventeenth-century England many writers, such as Jane Anger, Esther Sowernam, Constantia Munda, Mary Tattle-well and Joan Hit-him-home—following Pisan's arguments—devised defences of women answering the misogynist literature. These writers were referred to as "early feminists" by some scholars in the twentieth century. They were called the "early feminists" as they emphasised the difference between sex and gender by arguing that the inferiority of women are culture-specific (related to the lack of education, economic and legal independence). Following Pisan's example, "the early feminists […] particularly noted male competitiveness; how men denigrated women out of fear that women would be found equal or even superior to them" (Kelly 15). Moreover, they were undertaking the task of voicing female justification, and they were aware of the uniqueness and precariousness of their situation as female writers. They all acknowledged that their situation was transgressive as they were acting contrary to traditional female silence. Anger tells that she "stretch the veins of her brains, the strings of her fingers and lists [limits] of her modesty to answer" the attacks (Henderson and McManus 174); Sowernam claims she has been provoked "to use more vehement speeches than may seem to correspond to the natural disposition of a Woman;" and Munda argues that "though feminine modesty hath confined [their] rarest and ripest wits to silence […] when necessity compels [them], 'tis a great fault and folly" to remain silent (Henderson and McManus 249). Thus they willingly admit their transgressive situation—their speech—that has been considered monstrous and devilish by many attackers.[46]

[45] Cited in Wiesner 21; also see Joan Kelly "Early Feminist Theory."
[46] See the argument about the speech of women being derived from the devil in the anonymous pamphlet the Schoolhouse of Women in Henderson and McManus 149. Joseph Swetnam in *The Arraignment of Women* and John Taylor in the *Juniper Lecture* also raise similar arguments. For Swetnam and Taylor see Henderson and McManus.

Furthermore, the defences written by women emphasised that the discrepancies between male and female were mostly culture-specific and argued that women were equal to men or even superior in mind and soul (see Henderson and McManus 22). For instance, the authors of the *Women's Sharp Revenge* clearly state that the difference between the sexes lies in the double standard of the education of boys and girls:

> When a Father hath a numerous issue of Sonnes and Daughters, the sonnes forsooth they must bee first put to the Grammar schoole, and after perchance sent to the University, and trained up in the Liberall Arts and Sciences, and there (if they prove not Block-heads) they may in time be boolkearned […] When we, whom they stile by the name of weaker Vessells […] have not that generous and liberall Educations, lest we should bee made able to vindicate our owne injuries… (Tattle-well 40-41)

The attacks generally depended on female stereotypes of the spendthrift, shrewish and deceitful wives who consumed their husbands' money and patience while cuckolding them with other men. The defences in return, argued that shrewish wives were generally reacting against their drunkard husbands who wasted the family money on drinking and gambling and against their husbands who beat them. All the misogynist attackers repeated more or less the same examples from the Bible and the classical texts about women which labelled women as monstrous as they, in one way another, undermined patriarchal authority. The female defenders resorted the same sources to "rewrite history," in Joan Kelly's terms.

The women writers of the defensive pamphlets were diverting Biblical arguments to fit their benefit. The most commonly used incident to argue the inferiority of women among the misogynist writers, was the creation of Eve. And almost all female defenders dealt with this issue in their pamphlets. They explained the later creation of Eve not as female subordination to male authority but as an advantage. Mary Tattle-well deploys the Biblical claim that Adam is created from clay and Eve from his rib, hence from human bone and concludes that women are superior "as man was made of pollution, earth, & slime; and woman was formed out of

that earth when it was first Refin'd:[47] as man had his Originall in the rude wide field, and woman had her frame and composure in Paradise" (Tattle-well 96).

Similarly, Sowernam argues that God "did so Create his works that every succeeding work was ever more excellent than what was formerly Created […] God intended to honour woman in a more excellent degree, in that he created her out of a subject refined as out of a Quintessence."[48] Almost all the defenders retold the story of creation to prove the superiority of women. According to their version, Eve is superior to Adam because God created her not from an earthly and filthy material such as clay but from a nobler material and unlike Adam, she was created not in earth but in Paradise.

The defenders were not only retelling the existing stories but also focusing on and telling the tales of historical women who ruled their countries or took arms to defend it, hence writing an alternative history that does not condemn women. Joan Kelly suggests that: "Amazonian figures and tales of matriarchy, along with the biographies of actual women warriors and rulers were perpetuated to keep alive a fading image of independent women and women as makers of culture and civilisation" (23). For instance, besides blessed figures such as Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, Sowernam gives a catalogue of figures of her "Country and Kingdom which have been incomparably benefited and honoured by women" (Henderson and McManus 229). Her list includes Boadicea in the time of the Romans, Emma in the time of the Danes, Saxon queen Ethelfleda, Eleanor—Edward I's wife who

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47 Earlier in her discussion Tattle-well explains what she means by refined: "when that earth and slime was purified, and made perfit (with being fully possessed with a Reasonable Soule)" (94). Mary Tattle-well and Joan Hit-him-home, *The Women's Sharp Revenge Or an answer to Sir Seldome Sober that writ those railing Pamphelets called the* Juniper *and* Crabtree *Lectures, &c,* 1640, *Women Writers Online,* 23 January 2006 <http://golf.services.brown.edu/WWO/php/rAll.php?doc=tattle.revenge.html&num> .

48 Henderson and McManus 223-224. Jane Anger uses a similar argument in *Her Protection For Women* (Henderson and McManus, 181), Rachel Speght argues for the superiority of the creation of women in *A Muzzle for Melastomus,* 1617, *Women Writers Online*, 23 January 2006 <http://golf.services.brown.edu/WWO/php/rAll.php?doc=speght.movzell.html&num=00231>.

accompanied him to the Crusades—and Queen Margaret who played an important role during the War of the Roses.[49]

Similarly, Tattle-well calls a half-legendary virago—Long Meg of Westminster—from her grave to defend women against the indecent misogynist pamphlets. Long Meg is a giant-like figure who caused "the begging souldier, when he saw/ [her] angry brow; tremble, and stood in awe" (Tattle-well Sig.A9r). During Henry VIII's reign, she fought against the French and "with [her] blows and knocks/ [she] made their bones ake" (Tattle-well Sig. A9v). Her valour caught the attention of King Henry who said "[…] amongst my brave and valiant men,/ I know not one more resolute, or bolder,/ And would have laid his sword upon [her] shoulder […] (Tattle-well Sig.A10r). Tattle-well makes Long Meg refer to the author(s) of the attacks as monsters and warn them as such:

> Confesse thine errour, fall upon thy knees,
> From us, to begge thy pardon by degrees.
> Else, I that with my sword and buckler durst
> Front swaggering Ruffians, put them to the worst [...]
> relent thine errour I advise thee
> Else in what shame soere thou shalt disguise thee,
> I shall inquire thee out: nay, if thou should
> Take on thee all those figures Proteus could,
> It were in vaine: nay, (which the more may daunt thee)
> Even to the grave, I vow my ghost shall haunt thee.
> Therefore, what's yet amisse, strive to amend,
> Thou knowest thy doom, if farther thou offend.
>
> (Tattle-well Sig.A9r-Sig.A10v)

Tattle-well uses this half-legendary virago, who corresponds quite well to the female monsters that some of the pamphlets include, to answer back at these attacks. Thus she revels in this gigantic monstrous figure and establishes her as the ultimate defender of the female sex.[50] Defences written by women often refer to such viragos as well as female rulers form the past

[49] Very interestingly, contrary to this glorification, Margaret is the witch-like queen of Shakespeare's Henry VI plays. The political and psychological causes under the grotesque representation of Margaret will be discussed later in Chapter IV.

[50] Middleton and Dekker's Roaring Girl, Moll Cutpurse, defend women in similar terms. For a more detailed discussion of Moll's defence see V.

and even from mythology in an attempt at writing an alternative, more positive history for women.

While the debates on women were a popular topic in 1590s and while pamphlet wars were heated, the commercial theatre utilized these debates as profitable theatrical material. One of William Shakespeare's earlier comedies, *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594), and Ben Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize: or the Tamer Tamed* (1604-14) were two plays that place themselves at the two ends of the debate.[51]

The Taming of the Shrew used the misogynist arguments and capitalised on the comic effect of having Katherine, who is "renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue" (I.ii.99), to be 'tamed' on stage. Petruchio, her 'tamer' acts with the typical idea of a misogynist:

> I will be master of what is mine own.
> She is my goods, my chattels, she is my house,
> My household stuff, my field, my barn,
> My horse, my ox, my ass, my any thing […] (III.ii.228-231)

Moving from this misogynist claim 'woman as property,' Petruchio undertakes the task of 'improving' his property. Katherine is believed to be "intolerable curst,/ and shrew and forward so beyond all measure" (I.ii.88-89) and Petruchio—her 'tamer'—decides to act even more curst and forward than Katherine, tires her by depriving her from food, sleep and nice clothes all in the pretence of his love and care for her. Nothing is good enough for his new bride: the bed is not soft enough, the food is over-cooked, the dress is out of fashion etc… This rather cruel 'taming' process gave room for a lot of slapstick comedy as Petruchio breaks things and beats the servants. Finally, he manages to turn Katherine into an obedient wife so

[51] In this study, I am interested in female characters that blur gender and social boundaries with their actions and who are represented in grotesque terms and/or internalise and utilize this grotesque nature. Both Katherine in *The Taming of the Shrew* and Maria in *The Woman's Prize* form threats to patriarchal authority and reveal the pettiness of male authority; however, their representations do not include grotesque elements. They do not quite embrace the concept of the grotesque—that is these female characters are not blurring the boundaries between two things, species or kinds. Neither Kate nor Maria assume any male power or masculine characteristics. I, nevertheless, included *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Woman's Prize* in this chapter as they are important in indicating the effect these debates had on society. Even though they are dealing with the debate for commercial purposes rather than social, these plays allow another space for its public exposure.

much so that her long speech at the end culminates in the moral, "place your hands below your husband's foot" (V.ii.176), that sums up all the misogynist debates.

Fletcher's *The Woman's Prize* places itself on the other end of the debate. Using the main male character of Shakespeare's comedy, the play formulates answers to some of the popular misogynist arguments and enforces the equality of the sexes.

Katherine is dead and Petruchio remarries. His new wife—Maria—is determined to 'tame' the wife-tamer while others pity her for being matched with this "dragon" (I.i.14). On her wedding night, Maria and her cousin Byancha shut themselves in the house, barricading all the doors and entrances so that the groom can have no access to the bride. They refuse to come out until their conditions are accepted. Petruchio is planning to beat Maria up and torture her once he gets hold of her (II.v.1160). But soon the whole issue turns into an almost feminist rally. We hear that "all the women in the Kingdom" started to rebel and gather to protect Maria. They claim that Maria is doing this "[…] to the comfort of distressed damsels,/ Weomen out-worn in wedlock […]" (II.vi.1315-17). Maria believes that they are doing this for a "noble Cause" and "women shall/ an hunred yeare hence speak" about them (II.ii.998-1000). Their plan works as Petruchio and Maria's father Petronius accept to grant their demands. The barricaded doors open; however, Maria still behaves like a 'shrewish' wife: scolding, spending lavishly on clothes and redecoration, and denying Petruchio access to her bedchamber. She continues this behaviour, ever increasing the dosage until Petruchio admits that she is his companion rather than his commodity. In other words, she uses the same tactics that Petruchio once used to tame Kate.

The play voices some of the major arguments that were used against the misogynist attacks, emphasising the equality of the sexes and the importance of fellowship in marriage. Maria's sister Livia claims that:

> […] no man shall make use of me;
> My beauty was born free, and free Ile give it
> To him that loves, not buys me […] (I.ii.152-154)

Similarly Maria points out:

> […] In mine own Noble will, that childish woman
> That lives a prisoner to her husbands pleasure,
> Has lost her making, and becomes a beast,
> Created for his use, not fellowship. (I.ii.282-285)

And when Petruchio tells her that she should be obedient since she is his wife now, she vents:

> Tell me o due obedience? what's a husband?
> What are we married for, to carry sumpters?
> Are we not one peece with you, and as worthy
> Our own intentions, as you yours?
> ……
> Take two small drops of water, equall weigh'd,
> Tell me which is the heaviest, and which ought
> First to discend in duty? (III.iii.1772-1779)

As a result of these exhaustive discourses and her harsh treatment, Maria finally succeeds in 'taming' Petruchio as he learns to respect her as a dignified human being and his companion in marriage.

Having discussed the female transgression on the discursive level and its reflections on the commercial stage, I will close this part by focusing on the active level of female transgression by accounting for early modern cases of social disturbances in which women are involved or indeed acted as central figures—the grain, enclosure and tax riots, religious sectarianism and even the Civil War. In doing this, I aim to illustrate that "the image of the disorderly woman […] could operate, first to widen behavioural options for women within and even outside marriage, and, second, to sanction riot and political disobedience for both men and women […]"[52]

There are several instances in the history of popular protest in which women played important roles as participants and even leaders of the riots between 1590s and 1640s.[53] The

[52] Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Cambridge:Polity Press, 1987) 131.
[53] See also Peter Clark "Popular Protest and Disturbance in Kent" *The Economic History Review* New Series 29 (1976): 365-382.

following quotation is an example that illustrates the female involvement in popular disturbances:

> A crowd of women […] gathered in the streets of Maldon […] the crowd processed through the town, calling other women out of their houses to join them as they went. They brushed aside the efforts of the town's magistrates to stop them and, with their children in tow, made for a place known as Burrow Hills […] The rioters now formed a formidable crowd, some 100 to 140 strong. An unknown number of rioters boarded one of the ships and forced its Flemish crew to fill the aprons and bonnets of women and children in the crowd with small quantities of grain from the ship's cargo of rye.[54]

This grain riot that occurred in 23 March 1629 in Essex points out how the lower classes suffered from the land enclosures in seventeenth-century England. As the aristocrats enclosed the lands they controlled, sometimes an entire village, and sometimes several villages would become the private property of one person. Villagers would lose their say not only on the agricultural area but also on the common land, which meant extreme impoverishment for the lower classes. Moreover, due to the merchants' stocking of large amounts of grain to export to foreign countries, the grain prices soared high in local markets. Villagers who could not grow grain for their sustenance or afford to buy it from the market often come on the verge of starvation. The fact that there would be plenty of grain in the granaries of foreign merchant ships and local lords while common people were starving increased the hostility against those who held the grain. Thus, when the food was scarce due to crop failures or when there was an economic crisis, riots would occur. Crowds, usually headed by women, would tear down enclosures, board trade ships, attack granaries and stole what grain they could carry off. As in this instance in Essex, when the authorities asked the women why they had attacked the Flemish ship, the answer would be due to "the Crie of the Country and hir owne want" (Walter 54).

Women thus, voiced the popular protest against the political and economic situation of their time. John Walter explains the pervasive presence of women in all food riots of the town

[54] John Walter, "Grain Riots and Popular Attitudes to the Law: Maldon and the Crisis of 1629," *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1980) 53.

as such: "As the group most involved in the round of face-to-face marketing, [women] were especially sensitive to price movements and abuses in the market place. As the social group most intimately connected with the everyday life of the community, they were through the network of the neighbourhood in an excellent position to gauge popular feelings and able to give voice to these in effective collective action" (62). In other words, due to their affairs in household economy, women were closely involved in the village economy and they had the means to organise crowds. Thus, in theory—that is in conduct books and educational manuals—women were represented in a passive and docile manner; but in practice they were quite active members of the village community. In fact, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford argued that the so-called domestic sphere or the feminine space in the early modern period was not confined to the house and the garden but included the bake house, the conduit, the river, the market, the church and even the ale house—practically all the village. They claim that women "created their own culture, in part, by demarcating and controlling their own space;"[55] moreover, they argued for the existence of an early modern feminine sub-culture that can exclude men and even manipulate them through exposure in a neighbourly network.

Whether there was a feminine sub-culture as such is open to debate; nevertheless, women played important roles in voicing the public discontent against the authorities. During a second riot in Maldon in 1629, which occurred due to depression in cloth industry, a woman named Ann Carter played the leading role. She had been reported to tour the towns to "drum up support" and sent letters to prospective supporters signed as "Captain Ann Carter." The reports account that she cried "come, my brave lads of Maldon, I will be your leader for we will not starve" (cited in Walter 72).

[55] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England: 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 205.

One of the reasons that women were involved in all the food riots of the time was their legal status. Lambarde, an early-seventeenth century writer, explained the legal status of women as such:

> If a number of women (or children under the age of discretion) do flocke together for their own cause, this is none assembly punishable by these statues, unlesse a man of discretion moued them to assemble for the doing of some unlawfull act. (qtd. in Walter 63)

Thus, women were not legal subjects as they were under the governance of their husbands or fathers. So, if they committed a crime they are not liable to punishment. This misogynist law gave an ambiguous legal status to women. On the one hand, this law subordinated women to their husbands and fathers; on the other, it gave them a license to act freely without the fear of punishment. And women involved in the riots consciously exploited this ambivalent situation to their benefit. As Walter suggests "in rioting, [women] were able to turn their marginal relationship to the structure of power within the community." (63)

Indeed, women seemed to exploit their equivocal situation to a greater extent within the course of the seventeenth century. Female involvement in the grain and enclosure riots might have influenced the thousands of women who actively contributed the "Cause" as propagandists, fund raisers, fortress builders, even soldiers during the Civil War and petitioned the parliament to complain about unjustified imprisonment in the years following the Civil War.[56] In contemporary accounts for these uprisings, women rioters and petitioners were often referred to as pirates, amazons, viragos, Lacedemoninas, fishwives, and witches depending on the political perspective of the author. The grotesque association in all these remarks is obvious whether they are used as sympathetic or derogatory terms. Indeed, there are cases in which rioters inverted these grotesque associations to serve their benefit. Davis accounts for such instances in which Lady Skimmington figures, men dressed as viragos and

[56] For a detailed information on the women petitioners see Patricia Higgins "The Reactions of Women, with Special Reference to Women Petitioners" in *Politics, Religion and the English Civil War* ed. Brian Manning (London:Edward Arnold Publishers, 1973) 178-222, see also Ellen Arthur's "Women Petitioners and the Long Parliament" *The English Historical Review* 24 (1909): 698-709.

actual women lead riots, tore down enclosures and turn pikes under the "sanction of being fairies."[57] Moreover, the crowd protected them against the soldiers by claiming that the attackers were "fairies who came from the mountains…" (Davis 147-149). Thus, cases like these and the very fact that so many women were involved in social riots may cast light on an image of woman that is quite contrary to the 'normative' woman of numerous early modern conduct books. This also is a sign as to how people manipulated the dominant patriarchal discourses and unlike the claims of the twentieth-century feminist critics, they indicate that the present image of female grotesque existed simultaneously with its subversion even in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Having thus laid out the historical background to women's association with the grotesque, chapters two and three will undertake to discuss some of the most common female grotesque figures—namely the witch, the Amazon—and their representations on the early modern stage.

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[57] Davis reminds that "these varied images of sexual topsy-turvy […] were available to city people who went to the theatre and to people who could read and afford books. They were also familiar to the lower orders more generally in both town and country through books that were read aloud and through stories, poems, proverbs, and broadsheets." (136)

CHAPTER III
"POOR, DEFORMED AND IGNORANT:" THE EARLY MODERN WITCH AS GROTESQUE IN *MACBETH* AND *THE WITCH OF EDMONTON*

Witches and witchcraft were phenomenal concepts of early modern Europe. Though belief patterns and practices were significantly different from those of continental Europe, people in Elizabethan and Jacobean England considered witches to be a part of their lives. The following quotation sums up the early modern concept of a witch:

> One sort of such as are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious […] They are leane and deformed, shewing melancholic in their faces, to the horror of all that see them. They are doting, scolds, mad, divelish […][58]

As we can infer from this description, witches and witchcraft cases were an integral part of the Renaissance grotesque. They displayed the main attributes of the concept of the grotesque. With its laws, secular, medical and ecclesiastical authorities, victims, witnesses and culprits; the carefully arranged charade of the witchcraft accusation appealed to the sense of wonder and spectacle in people. Similarly, the grotesque characteristics continue in the stereotypical description of the witch who was often believed to be deformed and crooked in a grotesque manner as well as occupying the most marginal space of the village community. However, before we discuss the social profile of the early modern witch and how this profile may suggest empowerment for some women in greater detail, it seems necessary to understand the particulars of the early modern belief in witches.

Even though belief in witchcraft had its roots in the Middle Ages, most of the witchcraft accusations in England took place between the second half of the sixteenth century and late seventeenth century.[59] In *Religion and the Decline of Magic,* Keith Thomas explains the social and anthropological reasons behind the witchcraft accusations in England during this

58 Reginald Scot, in 1584, gave this description that was based on general assumptions about the witch in his sceptical book on witchcraft where he criticised greatest witchcraft authorities. Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover Publications, 1972) 4.
59 For further information see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971) 454.

period. According to Thomas, the magical practices revolving around the Medieval Catholic Church, namely, saints, relics, anointments as protection against evil magic and miracles were all taken away from people with the Reformation. Thomas explains how all the once sacred and semi-magical practices of the church, such as baptism, confirmation, and the churching of women became blasphemous and how they were considered as nothing but superstition by Protestant reformers. Even prayer in Latin began to be considered as nothing but incantation and was replaced by prayer in vernacular language. Thomas explains how the Protestant reformers argued that all the famous Catholic clerics were sorcerers engaged in diabolic activity and Catholic miracles were considered witchcraft. For instance, a reformer, T. Becon regarded baptism and confirmation as nothing "but plain sorcery, Devilry, witchcraft, juggling, legerdemain, and all that naught is. The bishop mumbleth a few Latin words over the child, charmeth him, crosseth him, smeareth him with stinking popish oil, and tieth a linen band about the child's neck and sendeth him home" (qtd. in Thomas 56). One can see the obvious effort to denigrate Catholicism and how witchcraft was deployed as a part of religious and political propaganda. As Thomas argues, "Protestantism presented itself as a deliberate attempt to take the magical elements out of religion, to eliminate the idea that the rituals of the Church had about them a mechanical efficacy […] above all it diminished the institutional role of the church as the dispenser of divine grace" (75-6).

In other words, the once powerful church, which offered "supernatural aid" and some sort of protection against evil, was rendered ineffective with the Reformation. However, as Thomas points out "the problems for which the magical remedies of the past had provided some sort of solution—the fluctuations of nature, the hazards of fire, the threat of plague and disease, the fear of evil spirits, and all the uncertainties of daily life [continued]" (77). Hence, the need to attribute these misfortunes to some supernatural force persisted even with increasing urgency. And people began to turn to alternative sources for the solution of such

problems; namely, the white witches or the wise folk.[60] Cunning men and wise women, who provide assistance for lost property, practice counter-magic and fortune telling, and heal illnesses, were condemned by religious authorities as holding their powers not from God or angels but from the Devil. Theologians, without much success, tried to erase the distinction between white and black magic and argued that these supposed white witches were even more dangerous than those engaged in black magic as they were thought to be using the Devil in the name of God.

Since the late Middle Ages, belief in witches and witchcraft has been a part of a wider belief in the supernatural as well as belief in the Devil. Witchcraft was essentially connected with the Devil, as witches were believed to be the agents through which the Devil practiced evil. Witches were supposed to make a pact with the Devil, promising him their body and soul in return for supernatural powers. Thus, theoretically, witchcraft was considered a form of Devil worship and hence was tried and punished violently at the Inquisition in continental Europe. During the Middle Ages and the early modern period it is thought that almost 50.000 people were tortured and killed in mass witch-hunts of the inquisition.[61] Witches were first tortured to procure confession and then were executed by burning at the stake. However, these patterns seemed to be quite different in England. Historical records showed that witchcraft punishments were relatively less severe in England than continental Europe and Scotland. For instance, the usual sentence for a witch was not burning on stake but being hanged[62] and witches were not usually executed unless they were found guilty of taking someone's life. But nevertheless, witchcraft accusations generally involved public humiliation and unofficial violence towards the alleged witch. Among the ways to discover a witch was the burning of thatch from the roof of her house. If the person thought to be a witch arrived immediately on

[60] For detailed information on wise folk see Thomas, 212-252.
[61] James Sharpe, *Instruments of Darkness: Witchcraft in England 1550-1750* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996) 5.
[62] The accused were burnt only if their guilt involved petty treason such as a wife killing a husband or a servant killing a master.

the scene, which was highly likely as her house would be in danger, then her crime would be proved. A more violent way of discovery was to duck the accused woman in a nearby river or pond. If the woman floated then it was decided that she was a witch, as it was assumed that water being a natural element would refuse the unnatural witch. People thought that the witch's magic could be cured by pricking or pinching the witch in order to draw her blood. Moreover, it was assumed that the best way to fight with a witch's magic was to kill her in order to nullify her harm. For instance, in 1604, the ninety-four-year-old Agnes Fenn was "punched, pricked, and struck, threatened with firebrands and gunpowder and finally stabbed in the face with a knife" (qtd. in Thomas 530-531).

The legal bases for witch-hunts in England were the two witchcraft statues of 1563 and 1604. Before 1563, there were no laws regarding witchcraft per se. It was treated as a form of heresy and tried and prosecuted accordingly. Relatively less severe than the 1604 statue, the 1563 statue entailed capital punishment for "invocation of evill and wicked Spirites, to or for any Intent or Purpose" and for using "Witchcrafte Enchantment Charme or Sorcerie, whereby any p[er]son shall happen to be killed or destroyed."[63] In other words, the accused would only be killed if she were involved in someone's murder and would receive one-year imprisonment for 'lighter' accusations such as using witchcraft to search for treasure or lost property and even for injuring people or property by using witchcraft. However, the 1604 act made all these offences punishable by the death penalty and even their attempts deserved one-year imprisonment in the first conviction and death in the second. It is evident that in Jacobean England, attitudes towards witchcraft and patterns of prosecution and execution seemed to be relatively more influenced by continental practices. Moreover, the second harsher statue is generally attributed to James I's attitude toward witchcraft, which reflected general attitude in

63 Quoted in Alan Macfarlane's *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1999) 14. For the legal basis of the witchcraft cases also see James Sharpe's *Instruments of Darkness* 80-101.

Scotland.[64] James I, being an ardent combatant against witchcraft, took cases of witchcraft seriously, attended trials in person, and even published a treatise about the existence and danger of witches.

Indeed, belief in magic and witchcraft could be seen not only among the more ignorant and superstitious popular culture but also the highly sophisticated and intellectual elite culture of the Elizabethan and Jacobean society. James Sharpe, in *Instruments of Darkness*, explains how even the highly sophisticated people who could read and write three or four different languages, were equipped with the latest scientific and philosophical knowledge of his/her time believed in witchcraft, or rather what is referred to as magus. The ambition of gaining access to the mysteries of the world, or being able to make projections about future by way of magic was a respectable ideal among the elite. The use of witchcraft for political purposes was also not uncommon in the court. Sharpe argues that "the mental world of the educated Elizabethan or Jacobean was open to incorporating magic, astronomy, [or] alchemy […]" (42) all of which, though very different from witchcraft, dwell on its outskirts. Many Elizabethan and Jacobean men of learning such as John Dee, the royal astrologer of Queen Elizabeth I, dealt with these practices.[65]

In spite of the elite inclination towards the supernatural, most of the intellectual sources condemned witchcraft. However, there exists a difference between written sources, i.e. theoretical, philosophical, religious and popular pamphlet literature about witchcraft and historical and anthropological evidence regarding the practice. The former consider witchcraft as Devil worship with a whole set of contracts, beliefs and rituals as well as involving a large amount of misogynist ideas about women; whereas the latter indicate that it was mainly a domestic issue among the village community. First, I would like to give examples from the well-known intellectual arguments on witchcraft, and then by focusing on the historical

64 Scotland had always been more conservative on witchcraft cases. Witchcraft beliefs and patterns of accusation and punishment were similar to that of the continental Europe.
65 Sharpe cites various cases and witchcraft accusations among the early modern elite.

evidence, I aim to illustrate the discrepancy between the two. I also aim to point out that the social dynamics of witchcraft beliefs and the profile of the witch emerged from a highly complicated network of power relations rather than stereotypical dichotomised perceptions.

One of the core intellectual texts on witchcraft is *Malleus Maleficarum*,[66] or the Hammer of the Witches, which was first published in 1487 by two Catholic inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. It aimed to act as a general guidebook for the inquisitors in the identification, prosecution, and finally the punishment of witches. As one of the most popular and influential sources on witchcraft prosecutions, it formed the basis for most of the witchcraft accusations and the stereotypes of the witches in Renaissance texts both fictive and otherwise. The two Dominican inquisitors describe, in detail, the characteristics and practices of witches such as worshipping the Devil, killing new born babies, and having sexual relationships with incubi; as well as advices to judges on the prosecution of witches such as how to procure confession through torture.

Malleus Maleficarum is divided into three parts, which consist of question and answer sections. Question six of part one is concerned with "why it is that women are chiefly addicted to evil superstitions?"(Kramer 41) This part takes the form of a general argument on misogyny adopting the conventional discourses on the weakness and the wickedness of the female sex such as the arguments of the crooked rib and the first temptress.[67] The discussion is illustrated with examples from Biblical and ancient texts and authorities such as the Book of Genesis, and the Old Testament, St. Augustine, St. Dominic, Cato, Seneca, and Aristotle. Kramer and Sprenger argue that women are more prone to evil and to the Devil's temptations as they are weaker and less constant in their disposition and belief, Eve being the first and greatest example of this situation. Kramer and Sprenger claim that since women "are feebler

[66] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *The Malleus Maleficarum* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971). The book opens with pope Innocent VIII's bull against witchcraft. Apparently, the bull was declared upon the two inquisitors' request and warnings that people are not taking the evils of witchcraft seriously and that the church should be stricter on this evil practice. Fortified with this bull, the two inquisitors carried out their witch-hunt.
[67] For a more detailed discussion of general misogynist attacks in the early modern period see above Chapter II.

both in mind and body," (44) they are more credulous, more impressionable and "more ready to receive the influence of a disembodied spirit" (44). Other reasons listed as women's weaknesses are having "slippery tongues," curiosity, "wavering faith" and most tellingly stronger carnal desires. All these circulate a dangerously ambiguous nature, but it would appear that it is female sexuality which provides the most extreme reaction. According to Kramer and Sprenger, those who are potentially more prone to witchcraft are women with excessive lust, as they would become witches in order to copulate with the Devil. They even support that the female anatomy is an invitation to the Devil to reach a grotesque peak with the image of the insatiable "mouth of the womb" (Kramer and Sprenger 47). The argument takes up a hysterical note with the fear of castration as the authors' list of the witchcraft crimes include "inclining the minds of men to inordinate passion, obstructing their generative force, [and] removing the members accommodated to that act […]" (Kramer and Sprenger 47).

Another famous and influential text, perhaps more influential than *Malleus Maleficarum* in England, was King James I's *Daemonologie*.[68] It was first published in 1597 as an answer to sceptical texts such as Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchraft* (1584). The author refutes Scot's claim that many old women affected with melancholy are assumed to be witches by arguing that the people accused of witchcraft are generally "rich and worldly-wise, some of them fatte or corpulent in their bodies, and most part of them altogether given over to the pleasures of the flesh, continual haunting of companie, and all kind of merrines, both lawfull and unlawfull, which are thinges directly contrary to the symptomes of Melancholie" (James I 30). This heavily carnal remark also focuses on the ambiguous and sensual female body that lingers on the verge of grotesque.

[68] James VI and I, *Daemonologie: In Form of a Dialogue Divided into Three Bookes*, *The Witchcraft Collection,* Cornell University Library, 12 August 2005 <http://historical.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/witch/docviewer?did=162> .

Daemonologie argues for the existence and reality of the witches as well as ways to identify them. And in doing so, it adopts most of the arguments presented by *Malleus Maleficarum*. For example, James I's treatise follows its precursors regarding the discussion of the female witches outnumbering the male by claiming that the female sex "is frailer than man is, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Devill, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving of Eva at the beginning, which makes him the homelier with that sexe sensine" (James I 44).

Daemonologie adopts the arguments in *Malleus Maleficarum* while listing the ways witchcraft can be used to harm others. Witchcraft can be used:

> Either for obteining of riches, or for revenging them upon anie whome they have malice at: who granting their demande, as no doubt willinglie he wil, since it is to doe evill, he teacheth them the means, wherby they may do the same [… or for making] Pictures of waxe or clay: [69] That by the rosting thereof, the persones that they beare the name of, may be continuallie melted or dryed awaie by continuall sicknesse [… or for making] men or women to love or hate other [… or for laying] the sikness of one upon an other (James I 43-45)

All these become stereotypical witchcraft accusations after *Malleus Maleficarum*. Similarly, *Daemonologie* follows the path set by the inquisitors' book while giving tips to understand a person believed to be a witch:

> Such as were so accused of Witch-craft, could not be clearely tryed upon them, were at the least publickly knowen to be of a very evil life & reputation […] And besides that, there are two other good helpes that may be used for their trial: the one is the finding of their marke, and the trying the insensiblenes thereof. The other is their fleeting on the water […] so it appeares that God hath appoynted (for a super-naturall signe of the monstruous impietie of the Witches) that the water shal refuse to receive them in her bosom […] (James I 80-81)

[69] One famous incident about the wax images is the discovery of a plot to kill Queen Elizabeth I. In 1578, three wax figures, one of which was carved the name Elizabeth on the forehead, were discovered in a dunghill. An investigation was ordered immediately but historical records do not indicate any suspects to be caught (qtd. in Sharpe 45).

Here, James I is reciting the most well known ways of identifying witches, all of which indicate the equivocal identity of the witch and the threatening ambiguity of her body.[70] And his final decision about the witches casts light on the 1604 witchcraft statue as he thinks "they ought to be put to death according to the Law of God, the civill and imperial law, and municipall law of all Christian nations." (James I 77)

Among a bulk of early modern texts on witches, Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* appears as a unique text as it assumes a sceptical attitude about the practiced.[71] Scot published his treatise in 1584 to criticise various intellectual texts on witchcraft such as *Malleus Maleficarum* and Jean Bodin's *De La Demonomanie des Sorciers* (*Of the Demonomania of Witches*). *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* mocks the stereotypical arguments adopted in these texts and disproves them one by one. Scot states that he "finds almost all of them to agree in unconstancie, fables, and impossibilities" (273) and argues that the almost identical arguments adopted by these supposedly 'authoritative' texts are nothing but "old wives tales." Scot argues that:

> The fables of witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe root in the heart of man, that fewe or none can (nowadaies) with patience indure the hand and correction of God. For if any adversitie, reefe, sicknesse, loss of children, corne, cattel or libertie happen unto them; by and by they exclaime uppon witches... (1)

With this claim he reaches to the essence of the early modern witchcraft accusations. Like Scot, the Elizabethan and Jacobean court records show that they were not about Devil worship or the witches' Sabbath but domestic strife. He also points out that "if an old woman threaten or touch one being in health, who dieth shortlie after; or else is inflected with […] strange disease: it is (saith Bodin) a permanent fact, and such an evidence as condemnation or death must insue, without further proofe […] (13)." Thus, Scot's sceptical picture of

[70] These qualities attributed to the witch and her body will later be discussed in greater detail.
[71] There are various sceptical texts published in the second half of the seventeenth century and even more texts in the eighteenth century but Scot's text is unique as it was published as early as 1584.

those who are accused of witchcraft comes closer to the statistical evidence on witchcraft that the historians point out.

Likewise, historical evidence shows that most of the witchcraft accusations occur after a fight over alms, when something extraordinary happens to one of the relatives or property of the person who denies the accused witch alms. The maleficium often involved a domestic harm to members of the community rather than engaging in Devil worship, having sex with incubi, boiling babies or holding witches' Sabbath.

This phenomenon can be explained through the changing social atmosphere of the early modern period. With the change from communal nature of the manorial system to the understanding of the enclosed private property, the social welfare system blurred.[72] Thomas sees in many witchcraft accusations, the guilty conscience of the relatively rich members of the community. If any misfortune befalls on them or their family, they would immediately think that it happened because they denied what the poorer members of the community demand from them. Most of Scot's arguments presented in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* cast light on the complexity of the early modern witchcraft cases. His arguments were later taken up by twentieth century historians and backed up with sociological and historical evidence. Early modern practice of witchcraft was appealing to another group as well.

Since the 1970s, early modern witch-hunts were taken up by radical feminists as the systematic torturing and cleansing that the patriarchal authorities carried out against women. They have finally found, in Diane Purkiss' words, a 'Holocaust' for their cause. Moreover, the figure of the witch became a utopian trope for the radical activist feminist groups.[73] The early modern witch is romanticised as an unmarried figure, living independently on the

[72] With the changes in the poors' laws, the situation of who is to take care of the poor of a community became vague. Within the manor system a certain percentage of the towns' grain would be set aside to be distributed to the poorer members of the community but with the enclosures this system gradually disappeared.

[73] For further information on the radical feminist groups and the feminist attitude towards witchcraft see Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth Century Representations* (London: Routledge, 1996) 7-29. In her insightful chapter "A Holocaust of One's Own: The Myth of the Burning Times," Purkiss explains how the myth of the independent early modern sister and the burning executions as feminist holocaust is shaped by radical feminists. See also Sharpe, 169-173.

outskirts of a village, practicing midwifery and herbal therapy, familiar with a pre-patriarchal mystic culture. Many scholars argued that the witch-hunts were "a product of male-female conflict in the particular socio-historical setting of the Christian West in the fifteenth to seventeenth century."[74] However, as discussed above, the witchcraft accusations unfold in a highly complicated network of power relations shaped by a composite structure involving various layers of belief and social practices. They cannot be reduced to top-down, elite-popular or male-female struggle. The historical evidence indicates that most of the accusations, rather than coming from higher authorities, arise within the community itself and a great deal of women were involved in the prosecution process as accusers, witnesses and even authorities.

Most witchcraft accusations were over unexplained failure of a domestic activity or familial misfortune: The cows will stop giving milk, the cream would suddenly not churn, the spinning would go awry or a child would suddenly sicken. The housewife, having tried all the possible solutions against natural causes of the failure such as cleaning the utensils for churning and grinding the spindle, would start looking for supernatural causes and may easily come up with an accusation if she thinks the failure occurred right after she had an argument with a particular person or denying someone the use of a household utensil or alms.

Diane Purkiss, in *The Witch in History*, explains the psychological motives behind such accusations among women as the need to establish an identity within the community. The female identity defined by the early modern society was limited to the breeding of children and maintaining household economy but Purkiss suggests that "within this circumscribed space a rich network of cultural meanings was assigned to productive tasks […]" (94). Any failure in these productive tasks would likely to end in scarcity even the hunger of her household. Thus, Purkiss argues that "for women a witch was a figure who could be read

74 Marianne Hester, *Lewd Women and Wicked Witches: Study of the Dynamics of Male Domination* (London: Routledge, 1992), 116-117. She elaborates on this point with references to various scholars and their similar discussions.

against and within her own social identity as housewife and mother" (94). In other words, just like any other power group, women appropriated and negotiated with the definition of the witch "to satisfy private or public desires [and to cope with] anxieties of housekeeping and motherhood" (Purkiss 93)

Women played a role in witchcraft accusations not only as accusers and witnesses but also as authorities. They would often be appointed by the court to examine the accused witch's body for unusual signs that may indicate her evil practice and her relationship with the devil. As a sign of their profession, all the witches believed to bear on their body an 'unnatural' mark. It is a protuberance or a spot known as the witch's teat or nipple from which demons, in the shape of a domestic pet, are believed to have sucked blood. It is generally found in a secretive place in the witch's body, sometimes around her genitals and would not hurt or bleed when pricked. These "grave matrons" or "women of credit"— that is how they were referred to in legal sources—would examine the body and declare their expert opinion as to the existence of the witch's marks. Clive Holmes, in "Women: Witnesses and Witches," discusses in detail how the practice of searching for witch's marks by these women, though with a cultural complexity of its own, kept increasing during the course of the seventeenth century as the need for physical proof increased with the rise of the sceptical trend. These women were also employed to serve the elite agenda that aimed to establish the tangible proof of what they saw as the essence of the witchcraft cases, i.e. the pact with the Devil.[75] In other words, women were a regular part—as accusers or experts—of the complex web of power relations involved in early modern witchcraft accusations.

Having discussed the role of women in witchcraft accusations, it seems appropriate to return to our initial question: who is a witch; in other words, what is the social profile of the early modern witch? Keith Thomas describes witchcraft as "the attribution of misfortune to occult human agency" (436). Thus, witches were people who were assumed to be engaged in

[75] Clive Holmes, "Women: Witnesses and Witches," *Past and Present* 140 (1993): 45-78.

occult activities to injure people. They could be of either sex but as the statistics show that people who were thought to be witches were mostly female. The witches' *maleficium*, that is their harmful activity, could range from more domestic ones such as preventing cows from giving milk, beer from fermenting or butter from churning to more sinister harm such as causing the illness and death of people or farm animals.

A great majority of those who are accused of witchcraft were women. James Sharpe states that around 80 percent of those accused in European courts, and ninety percent of those in English courts were women (169). Alan Macfarlane points out that of the two hundred ninety one accused witches in Essex between 1560-1680 only twenty three were men (160). Moreover, those accused of witchcraft seemed to be poorer than their victims who are generally more prosperous members of the community such as husbandmen or yeomen or their wives and children.[76] And if one looks at their profile one would see close association with the grotesque. They generally are middle aged or old women (post-menopausal); widows or unmarried crones who are generally very poor. As discussed above, they are mostly among those who live on the alms granted by neighbours and wealthier members of the community, which puts them in an ambiguous position—not fitting in the familial or economic standards of the social order. Hence, they are 'not normal,' rather marginal members of the village community.

Almost all the early modern accounts of witches suggest that they are old women and Macfarlane's statistics in Essex cases indicate, "the likeliest age for a witch was between fifty and seventy" (161). Moreover, he adds that the witch's powers were believed to increase with age. Old age brought with it mystical powers and especially post-menopausal women were supposed to be more likely to possess evil powers than younger women. Statistics indicate that it was highly unlikely that married women with children would be suspected. Most accused witches were either married without children, widowed or were crones/spinsters; in

[76] For a more detailed statistics see Macfarlane, 158-167, Sharpe 172 and Thomas 502-534.

other words, those who were not a part of the 'healthy' and productive patriarchal society and facing serious economic difficulties due to their situation. Macfarlane points out that the witchcraft victims "appear to have been young adults […] quite often a generation younger than the accused" (162-163).

Similarly, in written sources, witches are generally described as deformed, ugly, old women. For instance a seventeenth-century writer John Gaule points out that "every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furr'd brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice or a scolding tongue [was] pronounced for a witch" (qtd. in Macfarlane 159). The ugliness and physical deformity was considered to be a powerful sign of the witch.

The witch's body was supposed to be grotesque in other ways as well. It was imagined to be boundless as the witch is assumed to have the power for shape-shifting and going out of her body to do harm. The formlessness of the witch who can extend her body to intrude boundaries of houses or even bodies[77] is threatening not only because of the harm she could cause but also it evokes the "terror of losing the self altogether to the malign and unseen power of another" (Purkiss 130). In other words, the witch existed as a grotesque threat to the clean, healthy, and intact self. Her open and fluid body is in constant flux and interacts not only with the victims but also with the Devil itself.

The common way of interaction was the suckling of the witch's familiar. It was a common belief that the witch would have an attending imp in the shape of a domestic animal—usually a dog or a cat, but also a toad, a fly or even a butterfly. It would assist her to carry out malicious supernatural acts and in return, the witch would let the familiar suck her blood from an opening, known as the witch's mark or the witch's teat. Diane Purkiss explains this phenomenon as the projection of the fears and anxieties surrounding the maternal female

[77] Witches are thought to be in physical contact with the person or the thing they bewitched. That is why most of the counter-magic methods involve acts that were thought to cause the witch physical pain, such as heating the bewitched object till it is red hot or applying a red-hot poker it.

body onto the witch.[78] The witch—with its diabolical nipple—represented the secreting, flowing and open maternal body that forms a threat to the closed self absorbed identity of the self. Just as the open maternal body, the witch, by suckling her familiars with blood, transgressed the boundaries between, pure and impure, human and animal, natural and supernatural.

Some women were considered to be witches even though there was no physical deformity about them. Macfarlane suggests that many women "were first suspected because they acted like witches, only later were they searched for some physical oddity, protuberance, or cavity which would confirm or refute suspicions" (158). Then what is the supposed behaviour or the type of personality associated with witches? It could be a range of actions: boasting, quarrelling, scolding or leading a 'lewd' life—which does not necessarily mean being promiscuous—were among the suspicious qualities. Also miserable women who went around begging and cursing those who deny them alms were most likely to be accused of witchcraft. In other words, any type of anti-social behaviour could be a cause for suspicion.

We have discussed how people suspected maleficium as a result of their guilty conscience when they deny alms or the use of a domestic utensil to someone and any mischance that befalls on them is immediately considered to be the maleficium of the denied person. This fearful projection turned the alleged witch into a powerful figure. Ritual cursing may be seen as the only outlet for the extremely poor and the weak in the face of local hostility.[79] Cursing and the threat of witchcraft became a power for these marginal women as no one dared to deny what they asked for. Reginald Scot suggests:

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[78] The breast and nourishing milk could easily be associated with taboo and pollution as they were a part of the lying-in process. Besides, the sore breasts and abscesses caused by the infection during lactation further associates the breast with pollution. In early modern medical texts milk was considered to be purified blood, which always caries the potential to be corrupted. Purkiss also explains other social anxieties surrounding breast-feeding. For instance, as it is nothing but the mother's purified blood, milk was believed to determine a child's identity; therefore if the milk received was not pure or if it belonged to someone inferior, it could affect the child's identity. Another anxiety causing nature of breast-feeding is its close resemblance to animal feeding. For further details on the fears of breast-feeding see Purkiss, 130-135.

[79] For the social and even political implications of ritual cursing see Thomas, 502-512.

> These miserable wretches are so odious unto all their neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them, or denie them anie thing they aske: whereby they take upon them; yea, and sometimes thinke, that they can doo such things as are beyond the abilitie of humane nature. These go from house to house, and from doore to doore for a pot full of milke, yest, drinke, pottage, or some such releefe; without the which they could hardlie live (5)

Similarly, twentieth century historian Clive Holmes explains how people approached their neighbours who were famed to possess certain powers, with caution. They often tried to avoid conflict with them and often sought their help as healers. Holmes accounts for various early modern cases in which the villagers "not only tolerated the petty thefts, begging and extortion of the suspected witches, but also employed them routinely both in domestic industry and as healers"[80] (52). Thus, the fantasies surrounding the grotesque and boundless body of the witch arising from her supposed capacity to intrude and destabilize other identities places her in a rather powerful marginal position. And this marginal condition of the witch in village community both as a threat and a healing figure may have acted as a source of empowerment for many women.[81] In order to illustrate how this possibility might be utilized on Renaissance stage, I will focus on two Jacobean witchcraft plays: *Macbeth* by Shakespeare and *The Witch of Edmonton* by William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford.

Renaissance stage capitalised on the concept of witchcraft to a great extent. Witchcraft plays or plays in which witches and wizards appear became very popular in the early modern period. Some playwrights created fictional witches based on popular beliefs and intellectual texts while others based their plays on actual witch trials gathering their material from the multitudinous pamphlets or even actual court records. These plays would often be staged as the trials still continued and the interest in those particular witches was the highest.

Plays approached the concept in various manners. While some plays represented witches as comical figures, others would treat them as dangerously evil figures, and yet others would go along with the sceptical literature to present the questioning attitude on the concept. These

[80] See especially 52-58 for the cases in which the witches were treated cautiously.
[81] I do not mean to trivialise or romanticise the witchcraft accusations and executions surrounding the concept of the early modern witch, but rather to point out to the possibilities surrounding this complex issue.

representations would have one aspect in common though. All the witches represented on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage were grotesque figures. Whether fictional or topical, the witch on stage was a highly marketable spectacle with her uncannily ambiguous appearance, highly dubious relationship with familiars and remarkably grotesque witchcraft practices. Even though they exploited stereotypical attributes of witches, some plays seem to be dwelling more on the ambiguous social status of the witch and portray quite powerful characters on the stage.

Two good examples of such witchcraft plays are *Macbeth* and *The Witch of Edmonton*. Even though loosely based on a short passage in Holinshed's chronicles, the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* fall more into the category of fictive witches while Mother Sawyer of *The Witch of Edmonton* is based on an actual pamphlet about a real contemporary witch. In spite of the two very different treatments of witchcraft in these plays, both the Weird Sisters along with Lady Macbeth, in *Macbeth*, and Mother Sawyer in *The Witch of Edmonton* share the ambiguous and grotesque characteristics of the witch.

Macbeth, when first staged in 1606, was capitalising not only on the popular appeal of the witch but also on the special interest of one particular royal audience, James I, whose intellectual interest in witchcraft has been discussed earlier. It has later been revised in 1611 with the elements of song and dance in line with the fashionable court masques.[82] However, under its lavishly designed spectacle, the play creates a particularly uncanny atmosphere with its emphasis on illusion and ambiguity. Apart from the equivocal prophecies and destinies, which will be discussed later, with numerous references to darkness and depictions of the night, the language of the play insists on creating the illusion of things that are not supported by visual data due to the convention of daylight performance.[83] *Macbeth* also has an uneasy

82 Various Jacobean court masques included witches as well as supernatural effects. For instance, Jonson staged his *Masque of Queens* in 1609 which may have led to *Macbeth's* altered 1611 version.

83 *Macbeth* was first performed in the Globe, as Shakespeare's company did not purchase the Blackfriars Theatre until 1608-9. Nicholas Brooke, in his introduction to the Oxford edition of *Macbeth*, argues that the play needs "a carefully controlled range of forms of dramatic illusion" to achieve the desired effect. For a detailed list of the

relationship with the grotesque via dominating and powerful female figures, namely, "the Weird Sisters" and Macbeth's "fiend-like queen." With their uncannily grotesque nature, these "women" blur the neatly defined physical, metaphysical and social categories and form a threat to the limits of the ego— in other words the limits of the self as a closed-off unit.

The identity of the three sisters appears to be rather ambiguous. They were sometimes portrayed as poor old women looting the corpses[84] and sometimes as supernatural creatures of prophecy. Indeed, the term witch is used mostly on the speech headings of the Folio edition. Within the play the word is used only once in act one scene three when the first witch tells how she bewitched the sailor's wife who denied her chestnuts and insulted her by calling her "witch." They refer to themselves as the Weird Sisters and other characters adopt the same form of address.[85] The word "weird" did not always have the modern sense of strange or odd. It comes from the Old English "wyrd" which means destiny or fate.[86] In Shakespeare's play we see the Weird Sisters acting as the three sisters of fate telling Macbeth's past, present and future.[87]

However, at the same time, they are physically grotesque in the manner of conventional witch figure and they are engaged in stereotypical activities associated with witchcraft.[88] The Sisters bewitch those who deny what they want and insult them such as the sailor's wife, kill domestic animals such as swine to harm those they dislike, keep familiars in the form of cats

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various tactics employed by the play see *The Oxford Shakespeare Macbeth*, ed. Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 1-6.

84 Even in that case they would still be uncannily grotesque. The macabre practice of looting the corpses would associate them with the other world.

85 See I.iii.32, I.v.7, III.i.2, III.iv.32, and IV.ii.136.

86 Henry Sweet, *The Student's Dictionary of Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1973) 214. Weird as a noun still means fate or destiny as well as a soothsayer. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the adjective form of the word as "relating to, or caused by witchcraft or the supernatural and of strange or extraordinary character." Retrieved from *Merriam-Webster Online,* 2005-2006 Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2 June 2006 <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>. The dictionary also has an entry on the Weird Sisters, defining them as the Fates.

87 See I.iii.48-50. In Shakespeare's source, Holinshed's *The Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577) they were described not as witches but as: "either the Weird Sisters, that is (as ye would say) the goddesses of destiny, or else some nymphs or fairies, indued with knowledge of prophecy by their necromantical science […]" (qtd. in *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts*, ed. William C. Carroll (London: Macmillan Press, 1999) 141-2).

88 The success of the play lies in the fact that the Weird Sisters are all these things at once. Their multiple and shifty nature adds to the destabilisation of identities that the play dwells upon.

or toads, raise spirits from the realm of the dead, and prepare magic potions from grotesque ingredients with the hint of dismembering dead bodies and killing unbaptised babies. Yet there is something darker and more sinister in them than merely stereotypical witches—that is their equivocal nature. It is voiced in the play in their first encounter with Macbeth and Banquo. When Banquo notices the weird sisters, his first reaction is as follows:

> So withered, and so wild in their attire,
> That look not like th' inhabitants o' the earth
> And yet are on't?—live you, or are you aught
> That man may question? You seem to understand me,
> By each at once her choppy finger laying
> Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
> And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
> That you are so.[89]

Not only are they old, physically deformed, and gender wise equivocal but also it is doubtful whether they are living creatures and, if so, whether human or not. Even their physical substance is questionable as they vanish into thin air. The sisters seem to be devoid of flesh and blood as Banquo suggests: "The earth hath bubbles, as the water has/ and these are of them" (I.iii.79-80). Accordingly, they serve as the core and the creator of the equivocal nature of the play.[90] The play opens with their incantation "fair is foul, and foul is fair" (I.i.10) which becomes the gist of the dramatic action. This is a world in which everything is reversible, in which the more people aim to change their fate the more they are unable to control it. The Weird Sisters' equivocal prophecies seem to be promising one thing while on the other hand prove to be something else.

This equivocal nature of the Weird Sisters adds to their uncaniness and makes them more than mere crowd appeasing attraction. All their stereotypical activities, singing and

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89 I.iii.38-47. All the quotations are from William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, The Oxford Shakespeare Editions, ed. Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

90 Equivocation would be charged with special political and religious connotations for the Renaissance audience as it was associated with the Jesuits who claimed that equivocation ("a mental reservation" that allows the telling of untruths or partial truths) is acceptable in order to protect their belief against the Protestants. Indeed, the Weird Sisters are associated with the Jesuits whose plot to assassinate the king has recently been discovered. For a detailed discussion of the topical relationship between the Gunpowder Plot and the "witches" see Garry Wills *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

dancing obviously add to the sensationalism of the show and the witch as a spectacle; however, I disagree with Diane Purkiss that the play is "a staging of violent misogyny for the benefit of a patriarchal absolutist paranoid about women's powers" (206). *Macbeth* voices anxieties about these powers yet never underestimates them. The Weird Sisters are always powerful figures in the play, having the upper hand in their encounters with men. The anxiety that the play addresses is the loss of will, in other words the disintegration of a fully developed independent self. This anxiety is voiced by Macbeth just after he hears that he has been made the Thane of Cawdor as the Weird Sisters foresaw:

> My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
> Shakes so my single state of man, that function
> Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
> But what is not. (I.iii.140-143)

Having witnessed the partial fulfilment of the Sisters' prophecies, Macbeth now boldly voices what he had probably been thinking for a while. Yet this thought, the thought of murder, which was surfaced only after the prophecies, is threatening Macbeth's "single state of man." Nicholas Brooke argues that this refers to man's unified body and soul[91], thus what is at stake here is the integrity of the unified self due to the interaction with one's repressed ambitions via uncannily grotesque elements.

Hence, the equivocal and grotesque Weird Sisters with the uncanny power to destabilize the control over one's identity are clearly more than the "missing comic sub-plot" (Purkiss 214). This is probably why since the Restoration,[92] numerous literary critics and theatre productions often turned them into a figment of Macbeth's imagination or helpless old women. This way, Macbeth appears to be in charge of his own fate and will; hence, the integrity of the self is preserved. However, unlike the air borne dagger there is no doubt about the reality of the three sisters as they appear not only to the audience but also to a reliable

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91 See Brooke's footnote in 107.

92 For a brief discussion on the earlier production history see Nicholas Brooke's introduction to *Macbeth* 34-49. For a more detailed discussion of the various stage interpretations of the "witches" see Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Macbeth* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1978) 2-32.

onstage witness, Banquo. Thus, in spite of the production attempts to diminish the powers of the Weird Sisters, they remain powerful sources of subversion.

Although the Weird Sisters are wonders to look at and their ambiguous eerie nature subverts neatly defined categories, Lady Macbeth's relationship with the grotesque is even more striking. As she is a socially integrated human being, her estrangement becomes even uncannier than the sisters. Lady Macbeth subverts the socially imposed boundaries on her body as female as well as challenging the notion of integral human identity. Lady Macbeth manipulates feminine behaviour when necessary such as playing the gracious hostess to Duncan, Banquo and other guests, and fainting to distract people when Macbeth begins to sound unconvincing while explaining the details of the night to others. However, she easily rejects the very same qualities under different circumstances. For instance, she denies the 'naturalness' of maternal instinct:

> […] I have given suck, and know
> How tender 't is to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,
> Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dashed the brains out, had I sworn as you
> Have done to this. (I.vii.54-59)

With this macabre description, Lady Macbeth rejects the 'quintessential' feminine urge. This severe breaking out of bonds that are considered 'natural,' renders her a grotesque figure. In other words, what makes her grotesque is the way she simultaneously aims to shed her humanity and deny her womanhood which becomes a threat to the very notion of masculinity itself. The first time she appears on stage, reading Macbeth's letter about his encounter with the witches, in act one scene five, Lady Macbeth is worried that her husband's nature "is too full o'the milk of human kindness" and that will hinder him to act in a way to match his ambition. Thus, she is determined to persuade him with the "valour of [her] tongue." As the scene proceeds, her passion heightens and reaches its peak in her eerie invocation to the powers-that-be:

> […] Come you spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood;
> Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th'effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall […] (I.v.37-46)

Lady Macbeth, in this speech, wants to shed her womanhood and maternal feelings but that does not mean that she wants to become more masculine. She probably need not become so because even in her most maternal, she is already endowed with qualities that are considered to be essentially male virtues such as valour. As Macbeth acknowledges, her "undaunted mettle" is suitable to "bring forth men-children only" (I.vii.74-75). Hence, with the "unsex me" invocation she is shedding not simply her femininity but rather her humanity. She wants her blood to be thickened to stop all the 'natural' feelings of conscience. The scene contrasts her resolution against Macbeth's weakness. She denies her humanity and forsakes her milk while Macbeth has too much of that milk.

This contrast prevails throughout most of the play. Macbeth spurred with ambition decides to kill Duncan but indeed as Lady Macbeth feared he lacks the resolution to carry out the deed. Thus, Lady Macbeth constantly urges her husband to finish up what he has started and as Bernard Lott points out in the introduction to New Swan edition of *Macbeth*, "Macbeth is again and again relieved of burdens and accusations because his wife is ready to excuse him and explain away […]."[93] For instance, she covers up the evidence on the night of the murder and makes up stories to fill in the gaps, similarly when Banquo's ghost appears in act three scene four, she excuses Macbeth's weird behaviour to the lords as a physical ailment.

Lady Macbeth often chides her husband and attacks his manhood either to urge him to do something or to recollect his senses and force him to behave calmly. When he freaks out

[93] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, New Swan Shakespeare editions, ed. Bernard Lott (Singapore: Longman Publications, 1965), xxiv.

and claims to see apparitions, she says "are you a man?" and tells Macbeth that what he claims to see is "the very painting of [his] fear" nothing but "a woman's story at a winter's fire,/ authorised by her grandam" (III.iv.61,67). In a sense, Lady Macbeth becomes the mother to this man-child as Marjorie Garber argues, this "suggests the displacement or replacement of 'maternal instinct.'"[94] She taunts Macbeth by calling him a baby or a child but at the same time looks after him and covers his faults like a mother. This infantilization reduces Macbeth's identity as a fully developed man but also threatens his sense of self as a human being. For instance, Lady Macbeth attacks her husband's manhood when he is afraid to carry out the murder:

> Lady Macbeth: […] Art thou afeard
> To be the same in thine own act and valour,
> As thou art in desire? […]
> […]
> Macbeth: Prithee peace:
> I dare do all that may become a man,
> Who dares do more is none.
> Lady Macbeth: What beast was't then
> That made you break this enterprise to me?
> When you durst do it, then you were a man;
> And, to be more than what you were, you would
> Be so much more the man […] (I.vii.39-51)

At the beginning, the idea is that Macbeth lacks valour, manly courage, to carry out the deed; however as the dialogue proceeds the issue becomes that of losing one's self. This conversation conflates both senses of the word "man," i.e. adult male and human being. Hence, voices the two dominant anxieties of the play are voiced: the fear of losing one's humanity and/or masculinity. Macbeth is simultaneously unmanned and dehumanised.

Since the eighteenth century, various misogynist arguments consider Lady Macbeth the cause of Macbeth's collapse. She is often portrayed as descending from the line of powerful witch-like Senecan characters such as Clytemnestra and Medea. The critics considered her "monstrous," "detestable" and too terrible to be a woman. On the other extreme, she is

[94] Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004) 714.

sometimes considered to be the loving wife who undertakes murder for the love of her husband.[95] However, she is far too complicated to be reduced to these paragons of virtue or vice. She is neither a monster nor a feeble creature as many critics and productions present her to be. She has a very strong character, determined and ambitious but in spite of her urge to shed her humanity, she still is a human being who is influenced by the burden of the murderous deed. The sleepwalking scene and her reported suicide in the end prove that she remains a human being in spite of the attempts to cast away her humanity. Her disturbed psyche can be interpreted as a sign of her humanity rather than her female frailty. Her constant hand-washing, rambling about murders, are no more signs of weakness than Macbeth's hallucinations, invisible daggers, ghosts and moral dilemmas.

In contrast to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* which, in spite of its topical allusions, is set in medieval Scotland with a supernatural atmosphere, Rowley, Dekker and Ford's *The Witch of Edmonton* is set in contemporary rural England with place names to indicate geographical closeness and familiar social relations to be found in a village society. Accordingly, the treatment of witchcraft in the play is significantly different from that of *Macbeth*. Mother Sawyer is based on the real story of Elizabeth Sawyer who was tried and condemned of witchcraft, and her execution took place weeks before the first staging of the play. The playwrights, aiming to capitalise on the scandal while it is still fresh on people's minds, wrote the play in collaboration; Dekker being responsible from the witchcraft scenes that involve Mother Sawyer, Ford from the domestic tragedy of Frank Thorney and Rowley from the comic Cuddy Banks sub-plot.[96]

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95 See Brooke's introduction 76-78 for Lady Macbeth's affinity with Classical figures and for further discussion of portrayals of Lady Macbeth as the terrible woman or the loving wife both in criticism and theatre see Rosenberg 158-205.

96 The case was retold in various forms and media of serious and popular literature. Dianne Purkiss gives a detailed account of these sources such as ballads, different pamphlets, partial court records and even puppet shows (Purkiss 233-234). However, the playwrights' major source would have been Henry Goodcole's 1621 pamphlet, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer, A Witch,* based on his interview with Elizabeth Sawyer in Newgate Prison.

These three plots of *The Witch of Edmonton* are loosely tied together with the geographical closeness as all the characters live in the same village and the mischievous workings of the devil in the form of a black dog. We will be focusing on Mother Sawyer plot but the rest also gives us a vivid depiction of early modern rural community in which the witch accusations occurred.

The social background to this topical witchcraft play would have been immensely real and familiar for the Jacobean audience. It is a closed small community with a strictly drawn social hierarchy. The play directs serious criticism to the people of this community as well as some practices carried on within the community, practices which would appear as commonly familiar to those who watch it. The local knight Sir Arthur Clarington seduces his maid Winnifride and plans to continue it by taking advantage of the secret marriage between Frank Thorney and Winnifriede. The Thorneys, bankrupt local gentry, are hoping to recover their financial loss by conveniently arranging the marriage between Frank Thorney and Susan, the daughter of a rich yeoman, obviously lower in social rank. This arranged marriage and dowry-hunting sets up the core of the domestic tragedy in the play as the circumstances cause young Thorney to get married with Susan while he is already married to pregnant Winnifriede. Forced into bigamy, and unwittingly tempted by the devil dog, Frank murders his second wife Susan which marks the beginning of events that will lead to his execution.

Lower down the community are Old Banks, Old Ratcliffe and other countrymen who are ganging on Mother Sawyer for the loss of their family members, cattle, or corn. Earlier in the chapter, it has been discussed how, in a community that depends on scarce means of livelihood, a diseased cattle or crop failure may mean serious suffering or even death. Accordingly in the play, rather than the authorities, the countrymen are the ones who gang up on Mother Sawyer for their losses and in return Mother Sawyer uses their livelihood and domestic chores to take revenge from those who taunt and insult her as she sends her familiar

to plague Old Banks' corn, lame some farmer's horse or prevent some housewife's butter from churning.

However, she is engaged in all these stereotypical activities only after she is taunted by the villagers. Hence, she decides to become a witch only after she is labelled as such. Elizabeth Sawyer is a good example of how female body as a grotesque and marginal figure is labelled as witch: First of all, she is very old, constantly referred as the hag or spinster with a severely deformed body. She is crook-backed and one-eyed both of which, as described in Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, are considered to be conventional physical attributes of a witch.[97] Moreover, she is economically and socially on the margins of Edmonton community, gathering sticks and fire wood for her subsistence, without husband or children.[98] Hence, she is hassled and tormented by the community, especially Old Banks. All these qualities seem to be in line with the social profile of the witch detailed out by historians such as Keith Thomas and Alan Macfarlane. The play seems to be not only exploiting the stereotype but also subverting it. Mother Sawyer's first soliloquy reveals not only her dejected position but also her awareness and questioning of it:

> And why on me? Why should the envious world
> Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
> 'Cause I am poor, deformed and ignorant,
> And like a bow buckled and bent together
> By some more strong in mischiefs than myself,
> Must I for that be made a common sink
> For all the filth and rubbish of men's tongues
> To fall and run into? Some call me witch,
> And being ignorant of myself, they go
> About to teach me how to be one, urging
> That my bad tongue, by their bad usage made so,
> Forspeaks their cattle, doth bewitch their corn,
> Themselves, their servants and their babes at nurse.
> This they enforce upon me, and in part

97 For Scot's description of the witch figure see page 38 in this chapter.

98 The playwrights have chosen to create her as a woman without a family whereas the real Elizabeth Sawyer had a husband and children. This would create more sympathy further emphasising the alienation as well as keeping in line with the descriptions of the witch, especially that of the sceptic Reginald Scot quoted above. For more information on the real Elizabeth Sawyer, see Henry Goodcole's pamphlet "The Wonderful Discoverie of Elizabeth Sawyer, a Witch, Late of Edmonton, Her Conviction and Condemnation and Death" in the Appendix of The Revels Edition of *The Witch of Edmonton*.

Make me to credit it […][99]

Right from the first entry of the so-called witch, the play begins to question the position of the witch within the early modern society. As Keith Thomas explains the social situation in early modern village community based on historical evidence, this passage clearly presents how the members of Edmonton community used witchcraft as an excuse to explain away the misfortunes that befell on them and how generally the poor, old and deformed women are chosen as scapegoats to the extent that they themselves believed in their power.

Thus, because she is already "shunned/ and hated like a sickness, made a scorn/ to all degrees and sexes" (II.i.107-109), Mother Sawyer decides to embrace this grotesque character and use it as a power to revenge upon her enemies who suck "the very blood/ of me and of my credit." (II.i. 124-125). Credit, or one's reputation, is extremely important in a village community. A woman's reputation could be a determining factor in witchcraft accusations. In other words, in a community that can use one's bad reputation as an evidence and proof of one's guilt, "'tis all one/ to be a witch as to be counted one" (II.i.125-126). Thus, Elizabeth Sawyer resorts to the only outlet of aggression that is open to her and embraces witchcraft as a form of power exertion against her tormentors.

She carries out her bewitchment with the help of a familiar in the form of a black dog. The description of the dog and the manner Mother Sawyer came into its acquaintance closely follows Henry Goodcole's pamphlet—the main source of the play. The dog appears when she was cursing and offers his help in return for her soul. The pact is signed, in a Faustian manner, with a drop of Mother Sawyer's blood. Anthony Dawson argues how simultaneously as a familiar the dog is "a mark of occult power" and at the same time "as a dog he is a symbol of order and domesticity."[100] This contradictory situation stands in the core of grotesque and at times sad relationship between Mother Sawyer and the black dog. The dog as the familiar

[99] II.i.1-14. All quotations are from William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton*, Revels Student Editions, eds. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).
[100] Anthony B. Dawson, "Witchcraft/Bigamy: Cultural Conflict in *The Witch of Edmonton*," *Renaissance Drama* 20 (1989): 84.

enables her revenge but at the same time it shows the extent of Mother Sawyer's emotional isolation, as the dog is the only creature in the play that Mother Sawyer has a loving relation with. However, this relation takes on rather a grotesque stand as the old woman begins to treat it as her lover:

> Mother Sawyer: […] Comfort me; thou shall have the teat anon.
> Dog: Bow, wow! I'll have it now.
> Mother Sawyer: I am dried up
> With cursing and with madness, and have yet
> No blood to moisten these sweet lips of thine.
> Stand on thy hind-legs up. Kiss me, my Tommy,
> And rub away some wrinkles on my brow
> By making my old ribs to shrug for joy
> Of thy fine tricks. What hast thou done? Let's tickle. (IV.i.166-173)

She uses terms of endearment and the physical intimacy that would create a rather grotesque scene with the dog standing and caressing the old woman like a human being. However, this grotesque scene with the hint of animalism holds more dangerous connotations for the Renaissance audience than just perversion.

First and foremost, it suggested the evidence of religious transgression, the pact with the Devil as the practice of the familiar sucking the witch's blood with its implied sexual connotations was considered the basic material evidence in witchcraft accusations. It was considered necessary by the learned authorities to render witchcraft as a serious theological crime rather than petty domestic malice. Indeed, the play simultaneously deploys and undermines popular beliefs in witchcraft.[101] Thatch burning, pinching and scratching to draw the witch's blood together with the sceptical remarks of the Justice that claim the accusers need more substantial evidence to accuse her of witchcraft otherwise they will prove themselves "stark fools" (IV.i.51). The authorities intervened only after serious harm is done, i.e. Old Ratcliffe's wife Anne gets mad and commits suicide, and Mother Sawyer was convicted after the existence of her familiar is testified by Cuddy Banks.

[101] For a detailed discussion of the play's treatment of popular and intellectual beliefs in witchcraft see Kathleen McLuskie, *Renaissance Dramatists* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989) 63-73.

However, the issue of the familiar and the witch's teat attests to other anxieties more concerned with sexual transgression as well. The symbolic signification of the teat about the anxieties surrounding maternal body and breast-feeding was discussed earlier in this chapter. Thus, Mother Sawyer, with this grotesque act, is transgressing the boundaries between human and non-human as well as sexual boundaries of her gender. In her most "maternal," Elizabeth Sawyer is forming a threat to patriarchal order in the fantasies of the community as voiced by one of the villagers:

> Our cattle fall, our wives fall, our daughters fall; and maidservants fall; and
> we ourselves shall not be able to stand if this beast be suffered to graze
> amongst us. (IV.i.15-17)

Mother Sawyer is the black sheep that needs to be discarded from the herd so that the herd can be a safely intact group again. This hysterical cry presents the extent to which the grotesque and marginal female figure constitutes a threat to the community. She is "plaguing" all the womenfolk to the extent that the male power over them is on the verge of disintegration unless she is eliminated from the community.

With the way she plagues her enemies and threatens social order, Elizabeth Sawyer conforms exactly to the stereotype of the witch; yet she is presented neither as a comic figure to be laughed at nor as a purely evil one to be despised. The play does not criticise Mother Sawyer; on the contrary, it opens up a space for the questioning of the stereotype. The way Mother Sawyer takes on the charges of the community by saying that "If every poor old woman be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten, as I am daily, she, to be revenged, have sold your soul to th' devil" (IV.i. 86-89) and she argues against the charges as such:

> A witch! Who is not?
> Hold not that universal name in scorn then.
> What are your painted things in princes' courts,
> Upon whose eyelids lust sits, blowing fires
> To burn men's souls in sensual hot desires,
> Upon whose naked paps a lecher's thought
> Acts sin in fouler shapes than can be wrought? (IV.i, 116-122)

This Shylock-like speech directs serious criticism to the hypocritical reactions and prejudices of the community. The play takes on a satirical stand with Mother Sawyer rather than against her. And instead of anger, hatred and moral condemnation of the witch, a general feeling of remorse and bitterness dominates the ending when Mother Sawyer and Frank Thorney were executed.

As it has been discussed in this chapter, the early modern witch was a grotesque creature with a subversively shifty social identity and ambivalently fluid body. The popular interest in legal witchcraft cases, together with the witch's grotesque nature, made her an attractive spectacle for Renaissance theatre companies. However, this grotesque figure on stage, whether in its fictional depiction as in *Macbeth* or topical depiction as in *The Witch of Edmonton*, also offered an opportunity for the representation of its strength and potential for the subversion of social and gender prejudices surrounding the notion of the witch.

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CHAPTER IV

"TIGER'S HEART WRAPP'D IN A WOMAN'S HIDE:"THE AMAZON AS GROTESQUE IN *HENRY VI* (PARTS I, II, III) AND *THE WHORE OF BABYLON*

This chapter will look at how one of the most common early modern female grotesque figures—the female warrior or the Amazon—is represented in plays that reread/recreate the events of a past age and how these representations reflect back on the contemporary politics of the era in which the plays were written. It will be concerned with the relationship between politics and the representation of the female characters.

From a feminist point of view, the history play can be considered one of the most male oriented genres of Renaissance drama.[102] It is often deemed to be highly chauvinistic due to its idealisation of a nostalgic past of male heroic deeds. As Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin point out:

> Even in Shakespeare's time, the history play was identified […] as a specifically masculine genre, and its masculinity was identified with its function as an ideological apparatus for the construction of an emergent national consciousness […] On the one hand, it looked nostalgically back to an older, feudal paradigm based on dynastic succession. On the other, it attempted to rationalize an emergent conception of a nation as defined by its geographical boundaries and an emergent conception of masculine authority based on personal achievement.[103]

Shakespeare's two tetralogies about the Wars of the Roses are seemingly no exception; especially the more canonical second tetralogy that silences and shuts its women in private domain. However, the first tetralogy is quite different from the second one. On the one hand, it supports the masculine ideological apparatus but on the other, the female characters and their actions appear to undermine it. Feminist critics are more interested in this tetralogy as it allows space for highly powerful women.[104] Of course, these women are not the heroic

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[102] For a more detailed discussion see Phyllis Rackin's "Foreign Country: The Place of Women and Sexuality in Shakespeare's Historical World" in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England,* ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) 68-95 especially 78-81.
[103] Jean E. Howard and Phylis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare"s English Histories*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 47.
[104] Howard and Rackin point out that the second tetralogy which is more popular and more canonical has significantly limited space for female characters; whereas the first tetralogy offers more space for female action,

protagonists but rather marginalised, even demonised figures. However, a deeper analysis would show that their sexualised power undermines and threatens masculinity of the male characters in the plays not because these women threaten to subvert patriarchal politics but because they are more skilful politicians than their male counterparts.

Accordingly, the first part of this chapter will deal with the three striking female figures of the three parts of Shakespeare's *Henry VI,* The French virago Joan la Pucelle, Eleanor Duchess of Gloucester and Henry's French queen Margaret of Anjou. These women are actively involved in the politics of the patriarchal feudal society—Joan and Margaret even lead armies to the war. While Joan proves an equal match for the English hero Talbot, Margaret does what her weak husband cannot achieve and strives to keep the Lancaster dynasty in power. What they are doing is sexually as well as politically transgressive. Accordingly, they are assumed to possess a demonized femininity and labelled as grotesque monsters, witches or Amazons by some of the male characters. However, the plays juxtapose these negative portrayals with positive comments. Joan is considered to be a saint in the French camp, and similarly Margaret is appreciated by the lords of the Lancastrian faction.

I am interested in what these female representations would signify within the cultural and political climate of Elizabethan England, namely, what these plays might have meant in terms of the English rivalry with France in the increasingly imperialist and capitalist international arena and what these plays about the collapse of an earlier socio-political system (feudalism) might have meant in terms of the rising absolute monarchy and nation states. Moreover, what they might have meant in a country ruled by a female monarch who self-consciously orchestrated her image with a carefully designed and almost theatrical iconography is of key importance.

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although the women are not represented as protagonists but as demonised figures. For the detailed statistics on the popularity of each tetralogy as well as the amount of lines they offer for female characters see Howard and Rackin, 20-30.

When Queen Elizabeth was crowned in 1558, the debate about a female ruler had already been heated.[105] John Knox, a zealous Puritan, had already published his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* arguing against the female regiments of Catholic Mary de Guise, her daughter Mary Queen of Scots and Mary Tudor. According to Knox, women cannot rule because they are "weake, fraile, impaicent, feble and foolishe… vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment."[106] He adopted all the misogynist clichés about female nature and supported his argument with ancient and Christian authorities. But his argument had its roots in a deeper anxiety. Knox claimed that "God hath reueled to some in this our age, that it is more than a monstre in nature, that a woman shall reigne and haue empire aboue man" (10). A ruling woman is a grotesque and monstrous creature as she would be inverting all the natural laws:

> To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled will and approued ordinance, and finallie it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice. (Knox 12)

What lies at the heart of Knox's discussion is that a female monarch would be blurring natural boundaries and standing against God's will. Knox claims that if women rule over men, "[…] the hole worlde to be transformed into Amazones" (13). Knox here takes up a common Renaissance anxiety felt in the face of the inverted rule of the Amazons—an anxiety which will later be discussed in greater detail. Knox's attacks on female monarchs adopted misogynist arguments about the nature of women but they were targeting Catholic rulers. Thus, when Elizabeth was crowned in the same year, Knox felt the need to indicate that he did not mean to offend Queen Elizabeth; he was aiming at Queen Mary and other Catholic queens.

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105 Patricia-Ann Lee discusses this issue in "A Bodye Politique to Governe: Aylmer, Knox and the Deabte on Queenship," *The Historian* 52 (1990): 242- 261.

106 John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women,* 1558, *Project Gutenberg,* 12 January 2006 <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext06/8trmp10.txt>.

With Elizabeth's succession, there were several pamphlets that praised and justified a female monarch. Robert Aylmer's *An Harborrowe for Faithful and Trewe Subjectes* (1559) is one such tract which responds to Knox's *First Blast* and refutes his arguments step by step. Aylmer admits the system of male authority and female subordination but goes on to argue that it may not always be the case and Queen Elizabeth is praised as an exception. She is by birth chosen to be a ruler; thus, is different from ordinary women who are destined to be subject to their husbands.

As Patricia-Ann Lee points out, "if Knox is prophetic and scriptural in his approach to the problems of female rule, Aylmer was in a broad sense pragmatic and political." (254) He approached the matter based not on natural and religious laws but on English laws and customs. Thus, according to Aylmer the English government system is secure enough to surpass human deficiencies. The government system in England is "not a mere Monarchie…nor a meere Oligarchie, nor Democratcie but a rule mixte of all these, wherein ech one of these have or should have like authoritie" (qtd. in Lee 255) This combined system would protect the government should the monarch, be it male or female, make any mistakes. Moreover, Aylmer focuses on English laws that admit women the right to inherit linking it to the inheritance of the throne. He claims that "for some secret purpose he [God] myndeth the female should reigne and governe;" thus, if "he sendeth a woman by birth, we may not send her by violence. He stabblisheth hir by law, we may not remove hir by wronge." (qtd. in Lee 251-52). Queen Elizabeth holds her right to rule by divine ordinance as she is the rightful heir to the throne. Indeed, the Queen had no doubt about her right to the throne as she indicates at an earlier stage of her regency:

> I am Gods Creature, ordeyned to obey his appointment I will thereto Yelde, desiringe from the bottom of my harte that I may have assistance of his Grace to bee the minister of his Heavenly Will in this office now commytted to me, and as I am but one Body naturellye Considered though by his permission in a Bodye Politique to Governe […] (qtd. in Lee 261)

She sounds absolutely certain about her right to rule and emphasises one of the most frequently addressed dualities in her carefully calculated regal image and iconography. She made the most of this duality in relation to her gender, and manipulated her weakness as a woman by using the two bodies of the monarch. As Leah Marcus points out, Queen Elizabeth often played on the concept of the king's two bodies[107] to create "the myth of her own androgyny" (137). For instance, she appeared in front of the British army at Tilbury in 1588, partially armoured and gave her famous speech: "I have the body but of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too."[108] And in her political speeches she generally referred to herself using male vocabulary with increasing frequency. As Marcus points out, she did not reject the term queen; however, she generally referred to herself as *prince*, a term with grotesquely androgynous connotations,[109] and later on in her reign she replaced the term with the more decisively masculine *king*.

Queen Elizabeth was very carefully constructing her own myth, image and iconography. Every speech she made, every public appearance she took was carefully calculated and designed to contribute to her iconography. Thus, the female characters in Elizabethan plays, especially in history plays become important images that either add to her image or comment on the nature of a female monarch. In other words, history plays became comments on Elizabethan politics. And after her death, the Queen became one of those characters that contributed to the political messages of the Jacobean era. Thus, to illustrate how history plays comment on topical politics, the first part of this chapter will focus on the female characters in William Shakespeare's *Henry VI* plays and the second part will concentrate on Thomas

107 This was a concept descending from medieval times which presented the monarch as simultaneously "a frail earthly being subject to death and disease and an immortal being, the incarnation of a sacred principle of kingship" quoted in Leah Marcus, "Shakespeare's Comic Heroines, Elizabeth I, and the Political Uses of Androgyny" *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986) 138.
108 Quoted in Marcus 138.
109 The early modern view considered boys and women as alike, sharing similar physical qualities and the same social status, with the exception that for boys this was a transitory period as they eventually grew into manhood. Queen Elizabeth, in spite of her female 'body natural', was considered to possess the potential to grow into an adult male.

Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* to point out how Queen Elizabeth herself became an image for political allegory in the following era.

The first part of *Henry VI*[110] is dominated by Joan La Pucelle, the peasant girl who helped the French win great victories over the English. She is portrayed as a complex character who is described both positively and negatively in equal measure. She is simultaneously a hero and a villain, a maid and a prostitute, a saint and a witch, a virago and an Amazon. What follows is a close look at each duality in greater detail.

Joan is presented as a villain by the English. This, obviously has as much to do with her French origin as it does with her gender. She is the French heroine who caused a great deal of loss on the English side. In spite of the English representations of Joan as devilish, we do not see her on stage as such until the end. Until the very last act she is a very strong, heroic figure an equal match for the French Dauphin and even for the great English hero Talbot.

Talbot is the representation of the fading Chivalric ideals, the ultimate English hero. Thomas Nashe, in *Piers Pennilesse his Supplication to the Devil* (1592), tries to prove that plays are "no extreame; but rare exercise of virtue" by using Talbot: "How would it have joyed brave Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumph againe on the Stage, and have his bones newe embalmed with the tears of ten thousand spectators at least…"[111] Apart from being one of the earliest eye-witness accounts of the play and its great success, this passage clearly indicates the sentiments that the play is trying to capitalise upon. When *1 Henry VI* was staged in Elizabethan England, it must have had great effect on the audience's national pride.[112] With the same

110 From then on it will be referred to as *1Henry VI*. All the quotations are from *Henry VI Part 1,* The Arden Shakespeare 3rd series, ed. Edward Burns (London: Thompson Learning, 2000).
111 Quoted in the Arden introduction to 1 *Henry VI,* 1.
112 When the play was first staged in the early 1590s, England was once again laying claims onto the French soil. English troops were sent to France to besiege Rouen. The campaign was led by Queen Elizabeth's favourite Essex. Thus, some critics consider Talbot as the flattering representation of Essex while others interpret him as representing the ideal chivalric warrior in contrast to presumptuous Essex. It is hard to decide how these topical

intention is created Joan, the ultimate scapegoat representing the enemy.[113] However, the play offers a more complicated portrayal of these two icons and does not simply represent them as national binaries. On the one hand, it exploits the national sentiments of the audience by recalling a nostalgic feudal ideal and playing on such dualities as English heroic male versus French sly female; on the other, it undermines all those nostalgic ideals and clearly demarcated binaries.

Indeed, the play presents Joan as Talbot's counterpart in the French army. For instance, Talbot's name is enough to scare the French soldiers away (II.i.78-81), so are rumours about Joan's presence in the field to turn the battle to the benefit of the French. Just as French soldiers are afraid of Talbot's looks and his supernatural powers (II.i.46-47), the English immediately associate Joan with the supernatural. Talbot's ego is too big to admit Joan's power thus he immediately brands her as witch:

> Where is my strength, my valour, and my force?
> Our English troops retire, I cannot stay them;
> A woman clad in armour chaseth them
> Here, she comes, I'll have a bout with thee;
> Devil or devil's dam, I'll conjure thee:
> Blood will I draw on thee, thou art a witch […] (I.v.1-6.)

Obviously, the idea of a woman in armour fighting as a soldier and beating the 'valorous' English troops is so outrageous that she cannot be anything other than a witch, a supernatural monstrous power. Thus, Talbot, the ultimate soldier, is not planning to stop her with his

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allusions were interpreted by the Elizabethan audience; however, they are important in terms of indicating how the past can be reshaped to serve the purposes of the Elizabethan nation-state. For a more detailed discussion of the topicality of the play see Gabriel Bernhard Jackson "Topical Ideology: Witches, Amazons and Shakespeare's Joan of Arc," *English Literary Renaissance* 18 (1988): 44.

113 Richard Hardin applies Rene Girard's ideas on scapegoat to Shakespeare's Joan of Arc. Hardin points out that Joan is represented as "that "other" whom people choose to attack when they themselves cannot resolve conflict […] Anthropological investigations of scapegoats indicate that they must be like us in some ways, yet possess differences that will readily allow them to be punished while the guilty often go free." Richard Hardin, "Chronicles and Mythmaking in Shakespeare's Joan of Arc," *Shakespeare Survey* 42 (1990): 32. Joan becomes the ultimate scapegoat both for the French and the English. The male politicians of both parties maintained the truce after they sacrificed Joan. Those who called her a saint on the French camp remained silent during English accusations on Joan. The choice of victim in scapegoat procedures resembles the idea of the grotesque: the victim is someone similar yet different whereas the grotesque is the distortion of familiar objects. Joan is grotesque as she distorts the familiar images of a woman, a peasant and a chivalric warrior (a male aristocrat) by conflating these images in her identity; thus, she is a suitable candidate to become the scapegoat.

sword but with popular tactics and precautions adopted against witches.[114] Everything he knows as a masculine soldier fails when he faced the young girl. Female power is so disorienting and disruptive that it has got to be something devilishly supernatural, namely that of a witch.

However, right after this scene there follows another in which Joan is praised like a goddess on the French side. Charles Dauphin calls her "divinest creature, Astraea's daughter… glorious prophetess" (I.vi.43) and claims that "Joan la Pucelle shall be France's saint" (I.vi.68).[115] The play involves contradicting representations of Joan. But both representations point out that her power, whether coming from the devil or from God, is extraordinarily alien as it is completely unsuitable for her sex. Female power is immediately sexualised, demonised and theologised—in other words taken out of the every day world and placed in the realm of either God or the Devil. But the play also calls into question the masculinity of its 'ultimate hero.'

Act two, scene three indicates that the great English hero Talbot may not after all be so huge a figure as it seems. The French Countess of Auvergne plots to imprison Talbot in order to be famous and her account of Talbot in their first encounter indicates that myths about Talbot should have reasonable doubt and rumours are not to be fully trusted:

> Is this the scourge of France?
> Is this the Talbot, so much fear'd abroad?
> That with his name the mothers still their babes?
> […]
> Alas, this is a child, a silly dwarf!
> It cannot be this weak and writhled shrimp
> Should strike such terror to his enemies. (II.iii.15-23)

This encounter with the Countess of Auvergne, which is entirely Shakespeare's creation, diminishes the larger-than-life hero to a life-size figure, taunting his masculinity. In other words, the play gives enough evidence to mistrust both positive and negative representations

[114] For a detailed discussion of Elizabethan methods to fight a witch see chapter III "Poor, Deformed and Ignorant: The Early Modern Witch as Grotesque in *Macbeth* and *The Witch of Edmonton*"

[115] This suggestion becomes more ironic for twenty first century audience with the knowledge that in the twentieth century Joan was actually canonized as saint by the Catholic Church.

of each hero and invites us to acknowledge the ambiguity of these accounts and underlines the instability of gender categories.

Closely related to Joan's saint/witch duality is another one based on her sexuality—the maid/prostitute duality. Starting with the pun on her name, Shakespeare's Joan entirely plays on this binary. The historical figure always referred to herself as Jeanne la Pucelle. However, the play constantly puns on Joan's epithet by often referring to her as Joan Puzel. Pucelle means virgin in French while Puzel means a whore. [116] This pun is emphasised by Talbot:

> Puzel or pussel, Dolphin or dogfish,
> Your hearts I'll stamp out with my horse's heels
> And make a quagmire of your mingled brains. (I.iv.106-108)

Throughout the play, the tension between her virginity and her sexuality is played upon. Joan's extraordinary power that enabled her to cross gender boundaries rendered her grotesque image a titillating one. Joan's active involvement in politics and warfare and convincing oration skills are all transgressive activities that are alluringly maiden at best, connivingly bitchy at worst. Thus, men's reactions to her always imply a sexualised undertone. The image of a maid with an alluring tongue is a titillating one but at the same time this image renders men quite powerless, threatening their masculinity. Indeed, her first encounter with the Dauphin which is in the form of a teasing sword fight, full of sexual innuendo heated by Reignier and Alençon's bawdy remarks, ends with the Dauphin's surrendering words "Impatiently I burn with thy desire;/ My heart and hands thou hast at once subdu'd" (I.ii. 114-115). Just like the Dauphin, Talbot remains baffled after his first sword fight with Joan and expresses it as thus: "My thoughts are whirled like a potter's wheel,/ I know not where I am nor what I do" (I.v. 19-20). Similarly, Burgundy is impressed by her words: "I am vanquished: these haughty words of hers/ Have batt'red me like roaring cannon-shot/ And made me almost yield upon my knees" (III.iii.40-43).

116 For a detailed discussion of the pun see introduction to the Arden edition of *1 Henry VI* 23-27.

The ultimate 'containment' on this alluring danger comes at the end of the play when Joan claims that she is pregnant to save her life and lists several men as the father of her child. The incident is meant to be the final humiliating mark on her sexuality that aim to end the titillating ambiguity, crush her maiden licence and prove her promiscuous nature. However, the situation that aims to secure masculine power over a transgressive woman ironically offsets the vulnerability of that power as it reminds the audience that patriarchal authority is totally helpless in determining the father of a baby and has no proof other than the female testimony.[117]

The play also exploits the figures of the virago and Amazon in Joan's character. These were popular images that became quite fashionable in sixteenth-century England. Elizabethan iconography as well as Elizabethan literature made extensive use of these two types of fighting women. On the one hand, there was the cross-dressed, Christian virgin fighting like a knight for patriarchal values such as patriotism and religion; on the other, there was the sexually promiscuous and brutal pagan warrior living and fighting according to matriarchal codes. In a country ruled by a female monarch, both these images would be charged with ideological and iconographic significance. Thus, at this point, it is appropriate to look at the historical and literary representations of both images in order to understand how they were associated with Queen Elizabeth and how all these relate to Shakespeare's Joan.

In the sixteenth century, various poems, plays and travel narratives included accounts of Amazons. These representations of Amazons, as Louis Montrose points out, blend fascination

[117] The subversion becomes even more serious if you consider that, "the first tetralogy… imagine the past as a world where marriages are dynastic…genealogy authorizes social position…. [it is] an imagined world in which legitimacy descends through a blood line. In these early plays, women, often tainted by insinuations of sexual promiscuity, figure most frequently as threats to the purity of those blood lines. Their power to undermine patriarchal authority (here meaning the authority of the father) is indirectly registered in the degree of demonisation attending their representation" (Howard & Rackin 29). In other words, in a "society of sanguinity," to adopt Foucault's term from the *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, blood relations mattered the most and the symbolic power of blood determined the legitimacy of social relations. Hence, the inescapable indeterminacy of the blood relation between a father and a son is causing great anxiety for male authority. Michél Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (Penguin Books: London, 1978), 147-150.

with horror.[118] Thomas Heywood's description portrays the conventional Elizabethan image of Amazons:

> Their garments cover not their bodies round; their right side is still bare towards their breast; their upper roabe which is buckled or buttoned above descends no lower than the knee; one of their breasts they reserve safe untouched, with which they give sucke to their infants; the right brest they burne off, that with more facilitie they may draw a Bowe, thrill a Dart, or charge a Launce.[119]

The depiction combines sexual attraction, motherhood and warriorship in one image and the outcome is a promisingly enticing yet grotesquely distorted physicality. The alluring body revealed by their dress is not simply a male object of desire as it is immediately associated with breast feeding as well as artillery; moreover, it gets distorted with the severed breast.

The image gets even more grotesque in travel narratives. Amazons are geographically situated in far away, quasi-mythological lands, in Montrose's words, "beyond the receding boundary of *terra incognita*" (Montrose, 66). Thus, they are often the grotesque 'other' as in the case of an English chaplain's story that is heard from a Portuguese trader in Sierra Leone (1582):

> Near the mountains of the moon there is a queen, empress of all these Amazons, a witch and a cannibal who daily feeds on the flesh of boys. She ever remains unmarried, but she has intercourse with a great number of men by whom she begets offspring. The kingdom, however, remains hereditary to the daughters, not to the sons. (qtd. in Montrose 66)

The image of the Amazon is immediately coupled with unbridled sexuality, grotesque cannibalism and witchcraft. Indeed what is really threatening and grotesque about the Amazon culture is the inversion of patriarchal pattern of heredity. Renaissance texts about Amazons involve a deep anxiety about female sexuality and female power that threaten to effeminise men at best and emasculate them at worst. William Painter in "Novel of the Amazones" in the second book of *The Palace of Pleasures* (1575) openly voices this anxiety:

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118 Louis Adrian Montrose, "'Shaping Fantasies:' Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture," *Representations* 2 (1983): 61-69.

119 Quoted in Simon Shepherd, *Amazons and Warrior Women in Seventeenth Century English Drama* (Sussex: The Harvester Pres, 1981) 14.

> If they brought forth daughters, they nourished and trained them up in armes, and other manlik exercises …If they delivered of males, they sent them to their fathers, and if by chaunce they kept any backe, they murdered them, or else breake their armes and legs in sutch wise as they had no power to beare weapons, and served for nothynge but to spin, twist, and doe other feminine labour" (qtd. in Montrose 66).

What renders Amazons the most grotesque is this inversion of patriarchal roles. They become a serious cause of anxiety for the patriarchal English culture.

On the other hand, there were more positive images for a warrior woman. Even some Amazon queens were quite popular and association with them was quite praiseworthy. Indeed, especially after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, Queen Elizabeth was more increasingly associated with the Amazons; of course not with negative representations but with more glorious examples such as Penthesilea, the Amazon queen that helped Troy.[120] But the truely positive image of the fighting woman is the virago knight. Elizabethan literature is full of references to mythical, biblical and historical viragos, such as Diana, Belphoebe and Astraea; Deborah and Judith; and Boadicea, all of which were closely associated with Queen Elizabeth.[121] At the same time, various "Gloriana" texts written to praise the queen also focused on viragos like Britomart in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Almost all these figures were used to reinforce the queen's iconology as the virgin defender of Protestantism. She was the combination of the virgin mother—protective and nurturing and maiden warrior-goddess. Queen Elizabeth's famous Armada speech in Tilbury which was rumoured to be delivered by the queen in armour and her close association with the self-sacrificing pelican as well as the regenerating phoenix were all contributing to this dual image.[122]

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120 For further information on Queen Elizabeth as Amazon see Winfried Schleiner"s "*Divina Virago:* Queen Elizabeth as an Amazon," *Studies in Philology* 75 (1978): 163-180 and Gabriel Bernhard Jackson "Topical Ideology" 40-65.

121 For a detailed discussion of these women see Celeste Turner Wright's "Elizabethan Female Worthies," *Studies in Philology* 43 (1946): 628-43.

122 This speech and its implications will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. For a detailed discussion of Queen Elizabeth as Virgin Mary see Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother and Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: MacMillan, 1995). For the pelican and phoenix icons see Hackett 80-81.

The juxtaposition of the Amazon with the female knight presented a dual representation of the concept of the female warrior: on the one hand, extremely brutal and even monstrous but on the other, courageous, virtuous and beautiful. And *1 Henry VI* capitalises on both images in the figure of Joan. Her image is laden with complicated even contradictory implications. She is the French enemy full of wickedness and deceit yet at the same time she is a virago protecting her country just like Queen Elizabeth. Indeed, Joan is often praised with Queen Elizabeth's epithets. She is often referred to as "an Amazon/ and fightest with the sword of Deborah" (I.ii.104-105), or as "Astraea's daughter" (I.v.43). Moreover, the first scene she appears on stage she overcomes the Dauphin in a sword fight. The image of a warlike maid literally on top of the French heir should have been an amusingly topical sight for the Elizabethan public who remembers the French heir Alençon's courtship to Queen Elizabeth. Joan's resemblance to Queen Elizabeth's iconography is striking—especially when she uses one of Queen Elizabeth's common remarks and claims that she "exceeds [her] sex" (I.ii.92); however, she is also the enemy, not only as a French heroine but also as a ruling female. According to Nina Levine, as the play proceeds, Joan becomes an appropriate scapegoat for male anxieties about powerful and ruling women.[123]

The final scene that involves Joan's grotesque interrogation and execution seems to be the final triumph of patriarchy over unruly woman. Joan, the usurper of male power, the inverter of gender categories is marginalised, demonised, and appropriately punished. However, at a closer inspection the forces that overcome Joan are not the unified male front and chivalric ideals of Talbot but the 'Machiavel' York who serves his own interests rather than the nation's. As Nina Levine points out, "the play shows the aristocratic code of heroic virtue to be a fiction, one that may be exploited when it is politically convenient but which has no power in itself, not even to bring a "'band of brothers' together against a female

[123] Nina S. Levine, *Women's Matters: Politics, Gender, and Nation in Shakespeare"s Early History Plays*, (Newark: University of Delaware Pres, 1998) 33. The issue of male anxieties about a female monarch will be taken up later on in this chapter.

enemy" (46). This point becomes more striking if you consider the fact that in the end Talbot is defeated not by the conniving French woman but by the rivalry between male English aristocrats. His defeat indicates the disintegration of the patriarchal feudal ideal rather than the threat of an evil enemy. In fact, Talbot and Joan and the ideals they represent are defeated by the same force.

Thus by using Joan, the play exploits all these concepts such as, the feudal hero, English-French animosity, the alluring figure of the Amazon/virago, the appeal and condemnation of the supernatural and the witch. It plays upon the obvious binaries such as male bonding vs. female threat, native vs. alien, but at the same time refuses to come down on either one side or the other, exposing these nostalgic ideals as now outdated concepts which do not work anymore.

Joan dies at the end of part one but subversive power of the grotesque female continues to question traditional authority in the figures of other very powerful women. The second part[124] of *Henry VI*[125] is dominated by two ambitious women who are sworn enemies, Eleanor—the Duchess of Gloucester and Queen Margaret. Both women are better politicians than their husbands. They know their enemies and can foresee what is to come. Both are not afraid to take action, even to resort to extreme measures. Margaret first appears at the end of part one but in *2 Henry VI* we see that she is transformed from part one's beautiful prize to be wooed and won by Suffolk for Henry into a powerful politician and a stately queen who is

124 For convenience sake, I adopted the sequence followed in the First Folio edition (1623) that groups all history plays together and places the three *Henry VI* plays in chronological order in which the events take place. However, the possible date and sequence of *Henry VI* plays are cause for much debate among the scholars. Several critics such as A.J. Honigmann, Andrew Cairncross and Michael Hattaway argue for sequential composition for the three parts whereas critics like E.K. Chambers, Dover Wilson and Kristian Smidt point out to the discrepancies and inconsistencies between part one and two and claim that part one is a play on its own and is probably written after parts two and three. Stylistic analysis and information based on external evidence suggest that *Henry VI* parts two and three are written to form a two-part sequence and they probably precede part one. Henslowe's diary dates the first performance of *Henry VI* part one as the 3 March 1592 whereas parts two and three were probably performed sometime in 1591. For a more detailed discussion of the dating of Henry VI plays see introduction to the Arden edition to *Henry VI* part one, 6-8 and the Arden edition to *Henry VI* part two, 111-121.

125 From then on it will be referred to as 2 *Henry VI*. And all the quotations are from *Henry VI Part II,* The Arden Shakespeare 3rd series, ed. Ronald Knowles (London: Thompson Learning, 2002).

extremely disappointed in her weak and effeminate husband. This transformation is preparing us for the fierce warrior that she becomes in *3 Henry VI*. She will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter, but for the time being I will concentrate on Eleanor the Duchess of Gloucester.

Eleanor, at the beginning, is presented as the stereotypical unruly woman—refusing to be a meek, loyal and submissive wife. Instead she is proud and ambitious, keen on assuming the power and becoming the queen:[126]

> Were I a man, a duke, and next of blood,
> I would remove these tedious stumbling-blocks
> And smooth my way upon their headless necks;
> And being a woman, I will not be slack
> To play my part in Fortune's pageant… (I.ii.63-67)

Eleanor does not accept the passivity of her husband and she rejects her role as a silent woman. If she had the 'right' gender and the required rank she would be fierce, taking gruesome measures and the fact that she is a woman does not impede her. She knows politics is a performance, a carnival and is determined to take an active part in it. Resolved to take action, she consults a conjurer and a witch to foretell the future of her enemies. However, she seems to possess the knowledge without the need of supernatural powers, which is ironic because consulting to witches and spirits eventually leads to her downfall. She can judge the political circumstances and predict what is to come by herself. Eleanor warns her husband of his impending doom after she is banished:

> …the axe of death
> Hang over thee, as, sure, it shortly will;
> For Suffolk, he that can do all in all
> With her that hateth thee and hates us all,
> And York and impious Beaufort, that false priest,
> Have all limed bushes to betray thy wings… (II.iv.49-54)

This foreshadowing is not an occult prophecy but rather the warning of a foreseeing political judgement of the circumstances that Gloucester is unaware of.

126 Technically it is not a farfetched idea as the Duke of Gloucester is the Lord Protector and likely to become king if Henry dies without an heir.

On the surface, the play treats Eleanor as the unruly, treacherous woman who is duly punished. However, on a closer inspection one can see that she is presented as both a criminal and a victim. She is involved in ambitious plans and witchcraft which might be considered treasonous yet all her plans turn out to be a part of a grander treasonous plan plotted by her husband's enemies to bring him down. And the most convenient excuse to blame a powerful, active and ambitious woman is to accuse her of witchcraft.[127] Thus, her enemies employed Eleanor's male conjurer, Hume, to become their double sided agent. However, even her onstage act of conjuring spirits, the ocular proof of her crime, is undercut by the presence of York and Buckingham breaking the tense moment with their intervention, reminding us that all is part of a larger conspiracy plan. As Nina Levine points out, "rather than validating the familiar story of virago-witch-traitor as a universal truth, Shakespeare's presentation [of the Duchess of Gloucester] makes visible the ways in which this story is exploited and even fabricated by the Crown's true enemies" (60)

And in the end when Eleanor is suffering her public humiliation, she is presented as a loving wife and quite a noble, almost saint like figure enduring her penance. However, the punishment of this unruly woman does not put things right and restore patriarchal order. The Duke of Gloucester is one of the last men who is truly loyal to his king and really cares about the well-being of the state. Therefore, because Eleanor's punishment leads to Gloucester's death, the downfall of the state order is accelerated.

Shakespeare's Margaret conflates the negative stereotyping myths of the Yorkist chronicles and the fascination with a powerful and active female monarch. Ambitious, manlike, vengeful, adulterous and yet determined to protect the rights of her husband and her son; indeed doing what her gentle and pitiful husband cannot do. In order to protect the

[127] A similar instance occurs in *Richard III*. In act III, scene IV Richard uses witchcraft accusations to get rid of one of his enemies. He accuses Hastings with being accomplice to "Edward's wife, that monstrous witch/ consorted with that harlot strumpet Shore" (III.iv.69-70). Using women and witchcraft becomes a very convenient way of getting rid of a male enemy. William Shakespeare, *Richard III*, ed. R.E.C. Houghton, (Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press, 1965).

Lancastrian cause, she resorts to political tactics, leads armies and, when necessary, kills. The play capitalises on the myth that blames Margaret for the fall of the Lancastrian dynasty. Henry's marriage to this French princess without any dowry,[128] and his allotting of the hard-earned English territories in France to her father is presented as a source of unease among the English aristocrats. Moreover, Margaret's adulterous relationship with Suffolk, which is only an implication in historical sources such as Hall and Holinshed, is openly dramatised in the play. But on the other hand, it also emphasises her active and able regiment, her fierce protection of her son's right to the throne, which was given away easily by Henry, her ability and determination that is necessary to get rid of the enemies of the Crown as well as the way she leads armies: knowing when to attack and when to retreat. Margaret is in direct contrast to her husband—the legitimate male ruler.

As the lamentation for Henry V that opens *1 Henry VI* declares, his son is neither the determined ruler nor the warlike champion that his father used to be. Henry VI is rather the "schoolboy," the "effeminate prince" (I.i.35) and because of his weakness, the country is doomed to a chaotic future. One of the great signs of his infirmity is his passion for his wife. Henry dotes on Margaret and he is often blamed for that, especially for giving valuable French territories away. For the Renaissance mind, excessive affection to a woman has an effeminising effect on men.[129] When Henry first sees Margaret he expresses his infatuation thus:

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128 Women were the survivors of the Wars of the Roses. Aristocratic ladies with extensive lands that they inherit from their dead fathers and husbands—they often married more than once thus inheriting more land—became important prizes for the surviving lords as they meant great amount of power over an area. In a world that takes land as the ultimate source of power and that the more land one has the more power one can get in the political rivalry for the throne, these widows played an important, though passive, role with their dowries. Thus, when Margaret comes without a substantial dowry, it was not just a domestic failure. Henry VI by choosing to marry Margaret instead of a wife that is strategically more suitable broke the feudal expectations that perceive the body of the king as an extension of the state. Moreover, the women of Henry VI plays, namely Joan, Eleanor and Margaret do not settle for the passive role of a prize, but find a way to get actively involved in male politics. For the historical account of these dynastic marriages as well as the course of the wars see A.L. Rowse's *Bosworth Field: From Medieval to Tudor England,* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966).

129 Many books, pamphlets and tracts claimed that excessive attachment to women and spending too much time with them would actually soften a man and make him more like a woman. Puritan tracts such as Phillip Stubbs's *Anatomie of Abuses* (London: Johnson Reprint Company Limited, 1972), Renaissance books such as Castiglione's *Courtier* as well as anonymous pamphlets such as *Hic Mulier: or the Man-woman and Haec Vir:*

Her sight did ravish, but her grace in speech,
Her words y-clad with wisdom's majesty,
Makes me from wondering fall to weeping joys,
Such is the fulness of my heart's content. (I.i.32-35)

She is not only beautiful but also a good orator and a wise one too. Henry is content yet he is utterly powerless in front of Margaret. However, Margaret is extremely disappointed in Henry. He is neither the Renaissance courtier nor the determined ruler that Margaret hoped for. She complains to her lover Suffolk:

I thought King Henry had resembled thee
In courage, courtship, and proportion;
But all his mind is bent to holiness,
To number Ave-Maries on his beads;
His champions are the prophets and apostles;
His weapons, holy saws of sacred writ;
His study is his tilt-yard, and his loves
Are brazen images of canonized saints. (I.iii.54-62)

For Margaret, Henry's peaceful religiosity is a sign of his passivity. He does not live up to her expectations. Thus, she seeks in Suffolk what she could not find in Henry. However, she is not a typical adulteress who defies her husband but melts in front of her lover. She remains as powerful and wilful as she ever is and just like Henry, she renders Suffolk powerless. He becomes "as mild and gentle as the cradle-babe/ dying with mother's dug between its lips" (III.ii.392-3). He is infantilized in her powerful hands.

Margaret, unlike many powerful women in Elizabethan literature who choose an indirect rule via manipulation of their husbands or lovers, directly gets involved in politics of the country, taking crucial decisions. She is extremely disturbed by the fact that her husband, a grown man, shares his power and the rule of the country with a Lord Protector. Thus, she, cold-bloodedly, decides on Gloucester's death:

Queen…Believe me, lords, were none more wise than I—
And yet herein I judge mine own wit good—
This Gloucester should be quickly rid the world,
To rid us from the fear we have of him.

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or the Womanish-man (Exeter: The Rota, 1973) all warn men against effeminising effects of excessive female company and extravagant dress.

Cardinal. That he should die is a worthy policy… (III.i.231-35)

As the Cardinal points out, this cold-blooded murder is a political decision. Margaret is not afraid to take bold political action and does not break down with guilt like some of the great men who are involved in the plot. For instance, after Gloucester's death, Cardinal Beaufort is haunted by his guilty conscience, goes mad, and dies.

As a very strong political figure, Margaret is quite unhappy with what she considers weakness in her husband—namely his inaction. While York's huge army approaches to depose Henry, Margaret tries to convince her husband to run away to gain time and be able to decide on new tactics in London where the king is loved and supported:

> Away my lord! You are slow; for shame away!
> [….]
> What are you made of? You'll nor fight nor fly.
> Now is it manhood, wisdom and defence,
> To give the enemy way […] (V.ii.72-77)

Henry is disregarding his manhood with this inaction. His lack of masculinity renders Margaret even more grotesque as she becomes the authority defying the 'nature' of her womanhood. Part two closes with the signs that Margaret is now actively taking full control of the state matters.

The third part of *Henry VI*[130] largely capitalises on the complex issue of female monarch as positive and rule of a woman as negative concept. As a mother and queen consort, Margaret is definitely not an example image closely associated with Queen Elizabeth.[131] Margaret nevertheless is important in terms of the concept of a female monarch and in that sense may yield relevant information about the Queen. As discussed above, it was a peculiar age in which misogynist arguments about the female rule went hand in hand with praises of the Queen. And Queen Elizabeth was very sensitive about the issue of the female regiment. However, her image was firmly set by the time *Henry VI* plays were staged; thus, Margaret's

130 From then on it will be referred to as 3 *Henry VI*. And all the quotations are from *Henry VI Part III,* The Arden Shakespeare 3rd series, eds. John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen (London: Thompson Learning, 2001).
131 As discussed above, Joan of Arc is even a better example for Queen Elizabeth's image than Margaret.

fierce regency, which could be seen as a potential threat for Queen Elizabeth's image was not threatening. The scapegoat for the fall of Lancaster dynasty is obviously not a flattering example for Elizabeth. Margaret is cruel, manipulative and adulterous yet she is a determined and warlike ruler. She is not a praising image of the Queen and very different from her but at the same time she is important in terms of the nature of the female rule in the Elizabethan age.

In part three we see the absolute dominance of Margaret acting not only as a cunning politician but as Henry's "warlike queen" (II.i.122) leading Lancastrian armies. The play opens with the news that Margaret is in effect ruling the country: "The queen this day is holding her parliament" (I.i.35); however the Duke of York attends the parliament and forces Henry to disinherit his son and promise the crown to York dynasty after his death. Lords of the Lancaster faction are shocked by this news and run to the queen to inform her (I.i.182). Margaret, infuriated, bans Henry from her company and her bed until he repeals the act that disinherits her son and clearly indicates that she will resist:

> The northern lords that have forsworn thy colours
> Will follow mine, if once they see them spread;
> And spread they shall be, to thy foul disgrace
> And utter ruin of the house of York.
> Thus do I leave thee. Come son, let's away;
> Our army is ready… (I.i.251-56)

She indeed besieges York castle with twenty thousand men captures, stabs, and decapitates the Duke of York and had his head set on York gates. Through out the play, she is presented as a courageous general commanding her army or as a cunning politician that plays low to gain power. The soldiers and the lords around her believe she is a better ruler than her husband, because Henry is too weak and lacks the resolution to defy his enemies. Indeed, the Lancastrian lords claim that "the queen hath best success when [the king is] absent" (II.ii.74). Even Edward IV—the eldest son of the deceased Duke of York—tells Margaret: "I hear/ you, that are king, though he do wear the crown…" (II.ii.90)

She is ambitious and her power renders her a grotesque creature in the eyes of the threatened masculine 'heroes' of English politics. For instance, York curses her as the "she-wolf of France/ […] / How ill-beseeming is it in [her] sex/ To triumph, like an Amazonian trull" (I.iv.111-114) also adding that she has "tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide" (I.iv.137). For York, Margaret, just like Joan, is the embodiment of all the negative stereotypes—Frenchness, the figure of the Amazon and the image of the prostitute. Moreover, he claims that she is everything opposite to what a woman is:

> 'Tis beauty that make women proud;
> But, God he knows, thy share thereof is small;
> 'Tis virtue that doth make them most admired;
> The contrary doth make thee wonder'd at;
> 'Tis government that makes them seem divine;
> The want thereof makes thee abominable;
> Thou art opposite to every good
> […]
> And yet be seen to bear a woman's face?
> Women are soft, mild, pitiful and flexible,
> Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless. (I.iv.128-142)

Her refusal to fit into the traditional feminine role—virtuously silent and submissive, beautiful to gaze at, pitiful, and mild—and her adoption of all the qualities attributed to masculinity makes her an "abominable" spectacle to be "wonder'd at." What York refers to are rather positive qualities (stern, obdurate, remorseless) and may serve as praise when applied to a man but turn into insult when associated with a woman. It is also important to note that all these accusations go hand in hand with the emphasis that she is not just a woman but a *French* woman. Just as Joan's Frenchness contributed to her demonisation, Margaret's nationality becomes an integral part of the accusations directed at her. York's final cursing speech begins with the cry "she-wolf of France" and ends with "false French woman." Similarly, Edward York—future King Edward IV—mentions that if it were not for this French woman, Henry would have still kept his crown and their "title still had slept" (II.ii.160).

However, not every one in the play thinks this French woman is a monster. Lords and warriors of the Lancaster faction do respect Margaret's courage and praise her. Prince Edward, her son, voices the sentiment:

> Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
> Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,
> Infuse his breast wit magnanimity,
> And make him, naked, foil a man at arms…(V.iv.39-42)

And the Earl of Oxford and the Duke of Somerset join his praise by adding: "Women and children of so high courage,/ and warriors faint!" (V.iv.50-51). Unfortunately, this woman of high courage is defeated in the end. She is devastated when her husband and her son are murdered by Richard of Gloucester. Part three ends with the replacement of the "female monster" with the male one. Grotesquely deformed Richard will from now on be the centre of attention and rather than the "she-wolf of France," Richard will be the one who finally brings the patriarchal feudal system to an end.

In spite of her defeat Margaret remains a strong figure. She has an overpowering presence in *Richard III.* Her anger and her woe made her bitter yet she does not behave like a poor victim but rather like the fierce queen she once was. Though she lacks the power to act, she still retains her resolution that keeps her anger awake. She appears twice in the play each time cursing those who caused her pain but most of all to Richard who killed her husband. When she counts her woes her loss of queenship is always included.

Margaret's first appearance is in act one scene three. She returns from banishment, is not afraid of death and accuses everyone including Edward IV's queen—Elizabeth, Lord Grey, and Rivers. Richard reminds Margaret of Rutland's murder and York's curse on her. Then Margaret adopts the most frequent and fiercest weapon of the witches[132] and begins heaping curses on everyone who is involved in her downfall. Her curses are like a synopsis of the whole play as each comes true one by one with Richard's intrigues. Indeed, they begin to

[132] See chapter III "Poor, Deformed and Ignorant: The Early Modern Witch as the Female Grotesque in *Macbeth* and *The Witch of Edmonton.*"

work immediately. As soon as she leaves, Clarence is murdered and King Edward IV gets ill and dies.

When she appears for the second time in act four scene four, the young princes of Edward IV had been murdered by their uncle. Margaret enters first and is followed by Queen Elizabeth—Edward IV's widow—and Duchess of York, her mother-in-law. The women are filled with immense pain yet one does not get the feeling of sympathy felt for a victimised soft female suffering but rather a disturbing feeling of the uncanny. The three women sit side by side and curse at Richard like the Furies. The scene is unsettlingly grotesque. Its tone and language resembles a witch-like incantation but at the same time it is so touching that one cannot help but be affected by the dignity and power of these women while they suffer their pain and lament their loss. Even as a defeated and suffering woman, Margaret remains strong and resolute, refusing to adopt the female softness.

Each part of *Henry VI* is dominated by different women who are strong, resolute, disobedient, and who break out of the traditional female roles. They assume masculine power and political ambition that is considered to be unfit for a woman and thus branded as monsters or witches. Their ambition makes them rule men. Their political awareness sometimes causes them to resort to shrewd ways. Yet they do well, indeed better than many noble men, in this masculine world of political craftsmanship and warfare. This inversion of the patriarchal order is in itself grotesque. However, paradoxically, these women are not grotesque because they form a threat to the order but rather because they appear as the only alternative to the male rivalry that threatens the patriarchal authority.

The idea of an efficient and strong woman became even more striking during King James I's reign. The literary representations of a strong queen now served not as royal praise but rather as royal criticism. During the earlier years of King James' reign, there were a series

of Protestant allegories on Queen Elizabeth[133] that idealised the past age and commented on the failures of the new one.

In 1607 it was only four years since Queen Elizabeth died but she has already become a historical figure to be reshaped just like Joan of Arc or Queen Margaret. Thomas Dekker's allegorical play, *The Whore of Babylon*, is both a nostalgic look at the Elizabethan Age and a criticism of rising Catholic favouritism of the Jacobean rule. Written shortly after the Gunpowder Plot, the play capitalises on all the treasonous attacks—Catholic and non-Catholic—on Queen Elizabeth as well as the myth of the "fairy queen."

The Catholic Church is presented as the Empress of Babylon while Queen Elizabeth is Titania, the queen of the fairies. As the Lectori to the play indicates, the play aims to portray "the Greatness, Magnanimity, Constancy, Clemency and other the incomparable Heroical vertues of our late Queene. And (on the contrary part) the inuerterate malice, Treasons, Machinations, Vnderminings, and continual blody stratagems, of that purple whore of Roome […]"[134] In other words, this thinly disguised allegorical play glorifies an idealised image of Queen Elizabeth against the Catholic Church. And both the representations of the Fairy Queene and Dekker's anti-Catholic picture of the Papacy—as the famous image of the whore of Babylon riding a monstrous beast—form grotesque allegories for the political agenda.

The political agenda in the early seventeenth century was led by strong anti-Catholic tendencies. In 1605 King James negotiated a marriage proposal between his son Henry and the Spanih Infanta in an attempt to form political alliances with Catholic countries. In the same year, the Gunpodwer Plot was discovered; thus, when the play was staged, the anti-papist sentiments of the London audience were at the peak. According to militant puritans in the country, the marriage negotiations with Spain meant serious threat for England. Written to

[133] These plays are Samuel Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me* (1604), Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* parts I and II (1604/5), and Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1607). Of these plays, I will focus on Dekker's play as it yields the most grotesque representations.
[134] *The Whore of Babylon* in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Vol II, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1955), 497.

capitalise on these sentiments, *The Whore of Babylon* plays upon the "ideal of Post-Reformation England as a united Protestant nation, with a destiny to defeat the Antichrist of the Counter-Reformation."[135]

Dekker indeed portrays Papacy as the Antichrist. Papal Rome is "that mannish woman-Diuell,/ that lustfull bloudie Queene of Babylon" (V.ii.4-5). Thus, it becomes an ambiguous grotesque figure conflating gender categories as well as the realms of natural and supernatural. Yet this ambiguous figure is charged with stereotypical female crimes. She is constantly presented as a whore and an enchantress:

> Plain.: […] This freckled face queane, may be a witch
> Time: Shee is so; shee's that damned sorceresse,
> That keepes the inchanted towers of *Babylon*.
> This is the *Truth*, that did bewitch thee once.
> Plain.: Is this the speckled toade shee? Shee was then in mine eye, the goodliest woman that euer wore fore part of Sattin […]
> now shee is more vgly then a bawd. (III.ii.59-66)

With her small-pox-freckled face she is deformed and ugly as a toad. At the same time, she is a deceitful sorceress bewitching people, luring them with her lies. Apart from the whore and the witch, her third image is that of a mother. Several times in the play the Empress is presented as a mother whose breasts nourish her minions, the Catholic kings. However, she is not the self-sacrifising and compassionate mother but the monstrous witch-mother that feeds her familiar/offsprings with malice as the Third King points out:

> Reuenge
> Flie to our Empres bosome, there sucke treason,
> Sedition, Herezies, confederacies […] (I.ii.254-55)

The Empress is endowed with the stereotypical witch sign, the witch's teat[136] from which she feeds all sorts of malice to her familiars. It is the essential grotesque deformation on a witch's body. Her image gets even more grotesque as she is closely asscoiated with the seven-headed monster she rides. The Empress is the "purple-rider of the glorious beast" (IV.iii.32) at best

[135] Margot Heinemann qtd. in Susan Krantz "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in the *The Whore of Babylon*," *Studies in English Literature*, Vol.35 (1995), 271.
[136] For a detailed discussion of the witch's teat see the "Poor, Deformed and Ignorant: The Early Modern Witch as the Female Grotesque in *Macbeth* and *The Witch of Edmonton*."

and "the superstitious Harlot: purple whore/ the whore that rides on the rose-coloured beast" (Iv.iv.24-25) at worst. The beast is almost like an extension of the Empress—the two forming a Leviathan-like monster.

The Fairy Queene, on the other hand, stands against this tyrannical monster of Babylon. The play opens with several suitors, the kings loyal to the Empress, trying to win Titania's hand. These attempts are nothing but a tactic to win the Fairy land—that is England—to the Popish cause. These are thinly disguised depiction of the marriage proposals to Queen Elizabeth. Thus, like Queen Elizabeth, Titania tactfully evades all the suitors and remains the virgin queen.

One of the suitors, the Third King who represents the king of Spain, is the most conniving and persistent of all three. He is presented as the most dangerous of the Empress' minions.[137] He works from the inside, tempting Titania's subjects to the Empress' side:

> No: here Ile lurke,
> And in a Doue-like shape rauen above Doues:
> Ile suck allegiance from the common brest,
> Poyson the Courtier with ambitious drugs,
> Throw bane into the cups where learninge drinkes,
> Ile be a Saint, a Furie, Angell, Deuill […] (I.ii.269-274)

The shape-shifting minion of the Empress is quite similar to the witch's familiar spirits. And it is the Third King who hires a conjurer to attempt assassinating Titania by burying her waxen image in a dunghill. This common witchcraft practice works in quite a grotesque manner:

> This virgin waxe,
> Burie I will in slimie putred ground,
> Where it may peece-meale rot: As this consumes,
> So shall shee pine, and (after langour) die.
> These pinnes shall sticke like daggers to her heart
> And eating through her breast, turne there to gripings,
> Cramp-like Convulsions shrinking up her nerues,

[137] Spain is presented as the archenemy due to the marriage controversy discussed earlier. For further information on the Spanish enemy and the marriage controversy see Susan Krantz "Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in the *The Whore of Babylon*," *Studies in English Literature* 35 (1995): 271-291. Spain is also the most convenient of enemies because of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This Elizabethan victory served as a powerful allegory for the Protestant success against Papacy.

As into this they eate. (II.ii.169-175)

This rather abject image of the "virgin waxe" rotting in "slimie putred ground." A historical reference to an assassinaton attempt on Queen Elizabeth is presented as a Catholic intrigue; hence, deployed as topical allusion to Gunpowder Plot. The anti-papist sentiment was directed not only to Catholic community but also to the King himself.

In contrast to James I's pacifist policies, Titania is an active and able ruler defending her country fiercely. As Susan Krantz points out, "Dekker's Titania, as the ultimate Protestant soldier, symbolically embodies all the anti-Spanish and militaristic proponents of her reign" (281). She is presented as the martial maid, the ultimate commander who leads her armies to war:

Your Queene will to the field, it shall be said,
Once souldiers to their Captaine had a Maide. (V.ii.228-229)

Titania refers to herself with a decisively female epithet yet she is far from a feminine courtly maid. She enjoys the 'masculine' activity of warcraft and prefers it to court life:

I like the martiall life so well,
I could change Courts to campes, in fields do dwell.
Tis a braue life: Me thinkes it best becomes
A Prince to march thus, betweene guns and drummes. (V.vi. 8-11)

Thus, as Titania's speech proceeds, she replaces the feminine epithet with masculine Prince, an epithet which Queen Elizabeth used quite often when she was referring to herself. In the battle field the Fairy Queene is fierce, determined and comfortable like an Amazon warrior:

Wh'im'e borne a souldier by the father's side.
The Cannon (thunders Zany) playes to vs,
Soft musikes tunes, and more mellodious:
And we more rarely like because all these,
That now can speake the language of sterne warre […] (V.vi.25-29)

Dekker's Titania is more like an Amazon than a fairy recalling nostalgically the military glory of the Spanish Armada. Thus, Queen Elizabeth and victories during her reign become political allegories to criticise the Jacobean pacifism. As Susan Frye points out in "The Myth of

Elizabeth at Tilbury,"[138] The Armada victory and Queen Elizabeth's famous Armada speech became more important political icons during the Jacobean period and Queen Elizabeth began to be presented in more martial terms than historical accounts and literary works written during her reign. As Catholicism and Papacy began to be seen more immediate and serious threats for the country in the early seventeenth century, the idea of a strong and able female monarch became more striking and Elizabeth was championed as the martial defendant of Protestant England.

The "Gloriana" image of Queen Elizabeth was further mythified to suit the Jacobean political agenda. Similarly, *Henry VI* plays deployed, the powerful women of the past age—namely Joan and Margaret— as a tool for political commentary. This chapter aimed to point out what the representations of the female grotesque may have signified within the cultural and political climate of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The chosen plays illustrate how highly powerful women become demonised grotesque figures not because they threaten to subvert patriarchal politics but because they are more skilful politicians than their male counterparts. Moreover, we see that these women willingly adopt the grotesque image to become active agents in politics rather than remain passive and submissive figures.

138 Susan Frye, "The Myth of Elizabeth at Tilbury," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992): 95-114.

CHAPTER V
SILENT WOMEN AND ROARING GIRLS: THE FEMALE CITIZEN AS GROTESQUE IN *BARTHOLOMEW FAIR, EPICOENE* AND *THE ROARING GIRL*

With the rise of absolute Monarchy in England during the seventeenth century, commercial revolution took a remarkably full course. England was no more a mere rural country whose wealth was primarily based on the production of wool, and cloth manufacturing. It had already become a vast imperial empire with a powerful navy protecting its overseas trade. In other words, it was well advanced in transition from medieval feudal economy to early modern capitalist[139] economy. Development of commerce and mercantilism turned London into not only one of the largest capitalist markets but also one of the most densely populated urban settlements in Europe. Lawrence Manley points out the city's growth as such:

> Between the death of Thomas More and the death of Milton, the population of London increased from 50,000 souls to half a million, transforming a late medieval commune into a metropolis that would soon become the largest capital and *entrepôt* in Europe.[140]

With its changing economic conditions, new social and moral values and the potential for mobility, the booming city formed a rich setting for popular drama. Established in the liberties of London where most of the commercial production/manufacturing took place and driven by the profit motive, the theatre of late Tudor and early Stuart England was undoubtedly a product of early capitalism. And from the last decades of the sixteenth century to the early decades of the seventeenth, as Douglas Bruster points out, the London dramatists "turned their attention to the relationship between sexual and monetary transaction in the city."[141] It is this climate which contributed to the development and rise of city comedy. Early Jacobean comedy does not take place in far away times and lands but in contemporary

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139 I am aware of the fact that in the seventeenh century capitalism was not in the state that was described by Marx and social Darwinists and sometimes the economic situation of the seventeenth century is referred to as proto-capitalism or commercialism. However, I strongly beleive that, whatever term may be used, basic features of capitalism such as entrepreneurship, profit motive, competition for market and the rules of supply and demand were all valid for the economic conditions of seventeenth-century England.

140 Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 125.

141 Douglas Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 17.

London.[142] Topographical landmarks such as St. Paul's and Bridewell and actual street names indicated specific locales to the London audience. According to Alexander Leggat, early Jacobean theatre is characterised by "the excitement of living in a sharply felt present, one in which the driving forces are material and sexual appetite. Money, property and class matter in these plays."[143] He also mentions "the interclass mobility" among the characteristics of early Jacobean city comedy. All these characteristics influenced the representation of the Renaissance concept of the grotesque in general and female grotesque in particular.

As discussed earlier, Renaissance period involved both terms of the grotesque—festive and uncanny. As England transformed from the feudal world to the capitalist, the worldviews also changed, concepts and terms were redesigned; therefore, the understanding of the medieval marketplace and festival was imbued with nascent capitalism. The seventeenth-century market was no longer just the gathering place but the hub of commercial action where commodity was constantly exchanged and money 'bred' itself; moreover, the communal market was being replaced by the private shop of the citizen.

Thus in the city comedy, the playfulness of the carnival grotesque is present but combined with a feeling of uncanny as a result of "commodity fetishism" that gives objects an identity of their own. [144] The commodity culture of early capitalism gave way to substitution/conflation of things and people. Objects gained identities of their own and people's identities explained or became associated with things. Human action or interaction was associated with or explained via objects or actions and deeds were substituted with

142 Even though the Rome of *Corialanus* or the Illyria of the *Twelfth Night* are nothing but thinly disguised pictures of England and London, these plays were nevertheless set in far away places and times. The difference in city comedy is the open acknowledgement and satirical engagement with the city.
143 Alexander Leggatt, *English Drama: Shakespeare to the Restoration, 1590-1660* (London: Longman Publishers, 1988) 103.
144 For a more detailed discussion of commodity fetishism in city comedy see Bruster, 90-96.

objects.[145] The carnival and festival was no longer innocent, utopian and communal but it was infused with sarcasm and satire against capitalist greed as well as hypocritical puritan propriety.

By focusing on three city comedies—namely Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene* and Middleton and Dekker's *The Roaring Girl*—I aim to analyse the nature of the Renaissance market, the effect of rising commodity culture in refashioning identities, the transformation of socio-sexual relationships as a result of the passing from a feudal society to a capitalist one and the meaning of all these changes in terms of the female grotesque.

One of the best examples to the composite image of the Renaissance market is Ursula's booth in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. With all the earthly and lower bodily associations, it is referred to as the "very womb and bed of enormity."[146] Ursula's booth is the core of the Fair as it is both the carnivalesque gathering place for people in the play and a commercial point. It is the meeting place not only for the inmates of the Fair but also for those who visit it. Everyone somehow stops at her booth. For instance, the hobby-horse seller Leatherhead and the gingerbread woman Trash argue in front of Ursula's stall. It is the meeting place for the cutpurse, Edgeworth, and his accomplice Nightingale. Similarly, Littlewit, his wife Win, her mother Dame Purecraft and Purecraft's Puritan suitor Busy stop at Ursula's stall to appease pregnant Win's affected craving for pig. Rakes Winwife and Quarlous end up at Ursula's stall when they enter the Fair. In other words, it brings together people from different social strata such as vendors, outlaws and prostitutes as well as 'respectable' citizens. However, neither

145 One of the best examples of commodity fetishism in *Bartholomew Fair* is Sir Bartholomew Cokes' craze for things in the Fair. He is the embodiment of the commercial aspect of the Fair. He establishes the link between him and the Fair as such: "I call it my Fair, because of Bartholomew: you know my name is Bartholomew, and Bartholomew Fair. (I.v.57-58) This young squire is fascinated with the goods in the Fair and in spite of his page's warnings he buys everything he comes across in the Fair:

> Those six horses, friend I'll have… And the three Jew's trumps; and half a dozen o'birds, and that drum, (I have one drum already) and your smiths (I like that device o'your smiths very pretty well) and four Halberts -- and (le' me see) that fine painted great lady, and her three women for state, I'll have. (III.iv.65-70)

146 II.ii.101. All the quotations from *Bartholomew Fair* and *Epicoene* are from Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, Ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

the Fair nor Ursula's stall is purely an "atmosphere of freedom, frankness and familiarity" (Bakhtin 153) as suggested by Bakhtin. They are also vicious capitalist establishments. There is no doubt as to Ursula's profit motives. She means business and instructs her apprentice Mooncalf about the prices: "five shillings a pig is my price, at least; if it be a sow-pig, sixpence more, if she be a great bellied wife, and long for it, sixpence more for that" (II.ii.103-105). The capitalist rule of supply and demand is to be used to gain the highest possible profit. It is not a festive banquet they are offering. One can enjoy the food and drink only if one can afford it and the price increases in accordance with the demand.

Ursula, like her booth, illustrates the conflated grotesque image. She is the epitome of the grotesque body and also a capitalist entrepreneur. The association between her fleshiness and her occupation is underlined at every scene she appears. She is referred to as the "the pillar of the Fair" (II.iii.49), "body o'the Fair!" (II.v.67), "Mother o'the bawds" (II.v.67), and "Mother o'the pigs" (II.v.68). She holds, in her figure, almost all sorts of grotesque imagery. In Ursula, human attributes are intertwined with animal qualities. For instance, she is often referred to as "the mother o'the pigs," with reference to her occupation or the "she-bear" with reference to her name.[147] Moreover, Knockem, the horse-courser, constantly refers to Ursula's organs in equine terms substituting hoofs for legs and tending her injured leg using equine terms such as stringhalt and maryhinchco (III.ii.55-56).

Her image emphasises the anatomical protuberances and orifices. She is the pig-woman; thus, her monstrous size and enormous hips and thighs are often emphasised. On her first appearance on stage, we find her complaining about galls on her hips and chiding her apprentice for not bringing her a chair big enough for her "rumps" (II.ii.64). The preference of the word "rump" instead of hips or buttocks is more than a simple occupational analogy, as it also underlines the bestial association. She is the "plain plump soft wench o'the suburbs […] juicy and wholesome" (II.v. 75-76) as opposed to the women that frequent the theatres; those

[147]Ursula is the bear-shaped constellation.

"[…] lean playhouse poultry, that has the bony rump sticking out like the ace of spades […]" (II.v. 94-95). These descriptions bring together animal imagery, food imagery and sexually transmitted diseases—the diseases of the lower bodily stratum—all in Ursula's enormous body. This gigantic body is alive and juicy with bodily secretions such as fat, grease and sweat. Among these secretions, sweat is emphasised in greater detail. Ursula's booth is a filthy and hot place; as she points out, "hell's a kind of cold cellar to't" (II.ii.45). As a result, she sweats and she explains her constant perspiration as such:

> I am all fire and fat… I shall e'en melt away to the first woman, a rib again, I am afraid. I do water the ground in knots as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the S's I make. (II.ii.49-51)

By underlining bodily secretions, Ursula's image also brings inside out. The sweating of Ursula's grotesque body has Bakhtinian connotations as it is closely associated with cosmic images. Melting away—turning of the solid body into liquid and watering the ground—breaks the boundaries of the unified body and once its borders disappear, it can interact with the world in new ways. Images of melting away and excessive sweating are charged with the concept of turning back into earth in order to create new life. It is the moment when "the limits between the body and the world are erased, leading to the fusion of the one with the other and with surrounding objects" (Bakhtin 310). Moreover, with Ursula's first woman/first mother association, the imagery in this passage becomes very similar to many Rablesian images in which "the typical grotesque image of sweating (similar to other elimination) plays a leading role even a cosmic role" (Bakhtin 330).

It seems that the borders of Ursula's body do not hold; it is liquefied. However, this imagery of melting into earth and mingling with other bodies does not always have cosmic and regenerative connotations but is often threatening for other entities, especially male bodies. She is imagined as a bog that sucks other bodies in and makes them a part of herself. A man "might sink into her and be drowned a week ere any friend he had could find where he

were." (II.v.85-86) Ursula is the all inclusive, ambivalent grotesque figure whose bodily borders are erased and intermingled with other bodies in both festive and uncanny terms.

At the same time, she is also the very product of capitalist commercialism. Earlier we discussed how Ursula's booth is a capitalist business and how Ursula herself is an entrepreneur who has already taken up all the commercial tricks. This can best be traced in her lecture on how she adulterates her tobacco and beer:

> But look to't sirrah, you were best; threepence a pipefull I will ha' made of all my whole halfpound of tobacco, and a quarter of a pound of coltsfoot mixed with it too, to eke it out…Then six and twenty shillings a barrel I will advance o' my bottle-ale; I ha' told you the ways how to raise it. Froth your cans well I'the filling, at length, rogue, and jog your bottles o'the buttock, sirrah, then skink out first glass, ever, and drink with all companies, though you be sure to be drunk; you'll misreckon the better, and be lesse ashamed on't. But your true trick, rascal, must be to be ever busy, and mis-take away the bottles and cans, in haste before they be half drunk off, and never hear any body call, (if they should chance to mark you) till you ha' brought fresh, and be able to forswear 'em. Give me a drink of ale. (II.ii.86-100)

This lecture on "mangonism"[148] is far from the world of "freedom, frankness and familiarity" (Bakhtin 153). Ursula is a cunning and wily product of her age. Thus, on the one hand her image suggests close associations with Renaissance grotesque with all the cosmic and universalist associations; on the other, she is an opportunist capitalist perfectly adjusted to the fierce conditions of the market. Thus, Ursula and her stall are the embodiment of the carnival not only with the emphasis on flesh, secretions, bestiality and carnality but also the unruly and transgressive nature of the fair as it is the place where the prostitutes, cutpurses and tricksters gather together. It is a place where food (pork, beer and tobacco), secretions (sweat and urine), sexuality (Ursula is often referred to as the mother of the bawds as she is also providing prostitutes for her customers), and identities (Mistress Overdo and Win Littlewit were transformed from 'respectable citizens' to prostitutes in Ursula's booth when they

[148] Mangonism means adulteration of commodity. Mangonism comes from "Latin *mango* meaning salesman, especially a slave dealer." For a more detailed discussion on the meaning and applications of this word see Bruster 89.

stopped to urinate) and commodity (Edgeworth's stolen goods) are exchanged and transformed.

Joan Trash is another female inmate of the Fair. Just like Ursula—the pig woman, Trash's identity is substituted with her goods and once again the boundaries between human and object/commodity are blurred. She is the gingerbread woman—producing, or rather mothering human-shaped gingerbread. With her "crooked" body and her "gingerbread-progeny," (II.ii.3) Joan is another grotesque figure. She is accused of mothering goods which are also suspected to be adulterated. Leatherhead, the hobby-horse seller, claims that her gingerbread is made of "stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger and dead honey" (II.ii. 8-9). Progeny should be associated with the regenerative qualities of the lower bodily stratum; however the suspicion that this progeny is not new life but stale, even rotten, commodity illustrates the ambivalent nature of the seventeenth century concept of the market and the festival.

Joan and Ursula's physical transgressions contribute immensely to the grotesquery of the Fair and other women in the play transgress their social restrictions to become a part of the Fair. The female characters break free from their bonds once they are at Smithfield. For instance, Grace Wellborn escapes her guardian Justice Overdo who is trying to force her into marrying someone that she does not like. At the Fair, Grace manages to slight her foolish fiancé who is dazzled by the 'toys' of the fair and marry the person of her choice. Similarly, Dame Purecraft, who is betrothed to Busy, escapes her 'Puritanical' fate and is happily matched with a 'madman' in the Fair.

Another female visitor who escapes into the Fair is Win-the-fight Littlewit. She is physically linked to the grotesquery of the Fair through her pregnancy. Her longing for pig is considered to be an illness: "the disease of longing, it is a disease a carnal disease, or appetite, incident to women; and as it is carnal, and incident, it is natural, very natural. Now pig, it is a meat, and a meat that is nourishing, and may be longed for, and so consequently eaten. It may

be eaten" (I.v.51-56). Pregnancy is immediately associated with the 'carnal provocations' of pig and eating flesh. Win's condition in itself is carnal and grotesque but it also enables her to escape Busy's puritanical ostracism and sneak into the Fair. In other words, Win's pregnancy licenses her to transgress and be a part of the grotesque world.

As Michael Bristol points out "carnival permit people to 'put on' new social roles, to borrow the clothing and the identity of someone else, and to adopt the language and manners—even the social position—of another"[149] just as Justice Overdo who assumes the role of a madman, or Mistress Overdo and Win Littlewit who dress as prostitutes. However, this carnival is never free from commercial subtext.

Even the festive entertainment of the Fair is charged with capitalist connotations. The puppet show is a good example of festive debasement and uncrowning in which rituals, symbols and high mythical level of classical literature are inverted and subjected to grotesque degradation. The classical romance tale of Hero and Leander is carried to contemporary London. The setting is the Fish Street, an infamous part of London where fish mongers dwell and prostitutes frequent. And the characters are accordingly debased. Hero is an apprentice to a dyer and his go-between is a boatman. Hero is a common prostitute and Cupid is a drawer. The inversion of the formal and serious for comic effect is a typical festive act, but in the puppet show the setting gets contemporary London in city comedy fashion and the characters all gain commercial features as they are engaged in common capitalist activities of the time such as Leander who is attached to the textile industry—the main capitalist activity in seventeenth-century London. Thus, once again the play conflates Bakthinian sense of the festive market with capitalism.

While *Bartholomew Fair* presents a composite festive and commercial image of the Renaissance market and the female grotesque in this market, another city comedy by Ben

[149] Michael D. Bristol, "Carnival and the Institutions of Theatre in Elizabethan England," *English Literary History*, 50 (1983) 643.

Jonson adopts carnivalesque capitalism to point out how the male-female sexual and reproductive relations are transformed in nascent capitalist social order. *Epicoene*, *or the Silent Woman* illustrates how sexual ambiguity and commodity fetishism created by the consumerist culture render women grotesque. In spite of the negative and misogynist overtones of this suggestion, the play implies that this capitalist culture also creates an opportunity for women to "construct new forms of selfhood through their manipulation of commodities."[150]

This city comedy is based on the trick that Dauphine Eugenie, a young gentleman, plays on his noise-hating uncle Morose who plans to get married and have children to disinherit him. Dauphine tricks his uncle by introducing him the so-called perfect wife, the silent woman, who turns out to be "a boy, a gentleman's son" (V.i.598) that Dauphine has commissioned. The pattern is that of a typical city comedy: a cunning young gallant, who is facing a threat to be deprived of financial and social status by an aged figure of authority, resorts to trickery to regain his status. But the trick he pulls inverts the social order based on blood relations mediated by female fertility and ensured by female chastity.[151] By bringing the power of commercialism to the foreground, this inversion affects the relation between gender dynamics and class throughout the play.

Sexual ambiguity and inversion begin even from the dramatis personae. Most of the names listed suggest some sort of gender inversion—either physically or grammatically. Dauphine Eugenie, Morose's disinherited nephew, has rather an ambiguous name. His name means 'noble heir' but the 'e' at the end of each word is feminine grammatical inflection.

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150 Marjorie Swann, "Refashioning Society in Ben Jonson's *Epiocene*," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 38, (1998) 311.

151 Marjorie Swann explains the conflicting relationship between Morose and his nephew as the struggle between older form of social order based on sanguinity in which social status is determined and passed on by blood relations and new capitalist social order in which symbols of social status such as title and land became commodities gained either by cunning strategies or by the power of money. The order of sanguinity is based on female fertility and women's chastity is of essence to maintain this order. Whereas chastity becomes only of secondary importance to social status in capitalist social order as "in a capitalist economy, rank and wealth may be commodified and transferred by contractual relationships between men which do not require female bodies (Swann 300). For a more detailed discussion of the order of sanguinity and its transformation see Michél Foucault, *History of Sexuality* Vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1978) 147-150.

Similarly, Sir Amorous La Foole bears a name suitable to his effeminate and affected character as La Foole is "a pseudo-French feminine form of 'the fool.'" Captain Otter, a middle class merchant, is named after an amphibious animal. The name indicates sexual ambiguity and it is clear that in the house Mistress Otter is the 'captain' rather than Captain Otter himself as according to their marriage agreement "[she] would be princess, and reign in [her] own house: and [he] would be [her] subject" (III.i.28-29). Madame Centaure's name is quite ambiguous as Centaurs are always male. But it suits her position and the role she adopted as a member of the lady's Collegiates very well. Not only because the male connotations but also because Centaurs are also characterised by their violent lechery. Finally, Epicoene is "in Greek and Latin grammar, a noun which can denote either sex without changing its grammatical gender; Jonson's transferred sense (of one who partakes of the characteristics of both sexes) would have been felt as a joke deriving from the grammatical term."[152] However, the ambiguity achieves more than mere joke. This ideal woman is indeed no woman at all. Epicoene's ambiguous gender undermines and deconstructs the concept of an ideally silent and chaste wife. Nevertheless, the ambiguous gender characteristics also add to the comedy of the play as the Morose's and La Foole's courtship and boastful claims become more ridiculous.

Morose's first impression about Epicoene is as follows:

> She is exceeding fair, and of a special good favour; a sweet composition or harmony of limbs: her temper of beauty has the true height of my blood. (II.v.15-17)

He is at first physically attracted to Epicoene. Moreover, she seems to be the figure of the ideal woman fulfilling all the necessary qualities of a conventional wife as silent, obedient and

[152] Quoted in notes to the Oxford edition Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 463.

chaste. Morose immediately aims to possess her. He moves from "my wife," to my "bedfere," to "my heifer" and finally "seals" her as his property.

However, the image of an ideal wife soon turns out to be an illusion. Not only because Epicoene is not a real woman but also because she becomes dominant and vocal immediately after the marriage ceremony. Morose mourns in panic when his "silent woman" becomes vociferous after the marriage ceremony and shows the servants that they are now working "in a family where [she] governs." Morose says: "She is my regent already! I have married a Penthesilea, a Semiramis, sold my liberty to a distaff" (III.iv.51-52). The vocal woman immediately gains Amazonian qualities. Her voice is the sign of her domineering power. By being vocal, Epicoene is crossing the boundaries of her identity and threatens Morose's patriarchal authority which renders her immediately a grotesque figure.

We also have a group of vocal and active women who are branded as Amazons, hermaphrodites or even monsters because they refuse to abide to the conventional roles of obedient wife and caring mother who gives birth to several children. Truewit introduces the group as such:

> A new foundation… of ladies, that call themselves the Collegiates, an order between courtiers and country-madams, that live [away] from their husbands
> […]
>
> …cry down, or up, what they like and dislike in a brain or a fashion, with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical authority… (I.i.80-6)

Peter Stallybrass argues how the speech of a woman is considered dangerous because it is transgressive. A speaking woman is impertinently crossing her boundaries and trespassing on the male territory.[153] Hence, with their independent speech and free sexuality, the Collegiates keep their orifices open and resist the idea of an enclosed individuality. However, their grotesque body and independent sexuality do not imply universal unity and regeneration. In

[153] For Peter Stallybrass's argument about early modern discourses on speech and chastity see Chapter II: "Monster of Nature" Early Modern Ideas on Monsters, Women and Curiosity.

fact, they refuse their female fertility by refusing to bear children on the account that "many births of a woman make her old, as many crops make the earth barren" (IV.iii.52-54). In the new capitalist social order these women do not define themselves with fertility and reproduction but form an identity based on commodity and consumption. Their bodies become open via appropriation of commodity in the form of various female prostheses such as wigs, false teeth and make-up. At the very beginning, the play adopts the debate whether women should acquire beauty via artificial means or not. Both sides of the debate are presented as Dauphine's friends Truewit and Clerimont argue for and against the issue respectively. The issue is not resolved to the favour of one or the other. The issue is once again brought up later in the play in Captain Otter's inverted emblazon of her wife:

> she has a peruke that's like a pound of hemp […] she spends me forty pound a year in mercury and hogs-bones. All her teeth were made in the Black-Friars, both her eyebrows in the Strand, and her hair in Silver-street. Every part of the town owns a piece of her. (IV.ii.79-85)

The convention of praising the beauty of the beloved in pieces is inverted and closely associated with the consumerism of early modern London. The "pieced beauty" (I.i.77) of Mistress Otter is highly grotesque as she is imagined to take "herself asunder still when she goes to bed, into some twenty boxes; and about next day noon is put together again, like a great German clock" (IV.ii.87-89). This description seems rather negative and misogynistic, meant to present Mistress Otter and ladies like her as laughing stock; however, it does not change the power dynamics in the Otter household. This mock description does not empower the greedy husband. On the contrary, he becomes the object of ridicule at the end of this scene as he gets a sound beating from Mistress Otter.[154]

[154] The marriage of Captain and Mistress Otter is not based on patriarchal values of sanguinity. It is rather the product of capitalist culture. Mistress Otter, with the self-made commercial fortune—she sells one of the most fashionable luxury goods of the age, China—has the power in the house. She bullies her husband and intimidates him by listing the prices of all the clothing articles she buys him. She uses commodity to emphasise her domination and power over Captain Otter and Captain Otter admits he "married with a six-thousand pound" and agreed to give her free reign in the house.

Indeed the play presents Mistress Otter and the Collegiates as wonders but not as fools to be laughed at. They are the witty party who laughs at fools at the end. The play mocks and directs criticism not at the ladies Collegiates but at the foolish braggarts who boast falsely to have enjoyed the favours of these women including Epicoene herself. Once Epicoene's true identity is discovered, Sir Amorous la Foole and John Daw together with Morose become the butt of the joke. With Epicoene, the play ridicules not only morbid and foolish Morose but at all those who insist on the idea of silent women and slander vocal women freely. The play closes with these lines:

> Nay, Sir Daw and Sir La Foole, you see the gentlewoman that has done you the favours! We are all thankful to you, and so should the womankind here,
> […]
> this Amazon, this champion of the sex, should beat you now thriftily, for the common slanders which ladies receive from such cuckoos as you are. You are they that, when no merit or fortune can make you hope to enjoy their bodies, will yet lie with their reputations, and make their fame suffer.
> (V.iv.204-213)

The play ends with the censure not of the self chosen grotesquery of the ladies Collegiates but rather of the "cuckoos" that slander these women.

Another seventeenth-century play that embraces female grotesquery at the expense of chauvinistic men is Middleton and Dekker's topical play, *The Roaring Girl.* The main character of the play is based on a real London character Mary Frith—also known as Moll Cutpurse—a notorious woman who spent her life mostly dressed in men's clothes. In the play, Moll is often associated with figures closely related to the grotesque such as, a hermaphrodite, a witch, or a monster but her self-chosen grotesquery also gives her the licence to speak freely and criticise as she wishes. Moll engages in what Russo calls "wilful erring," committing all the errors she mentions—namely, losing one's femininity, making a spectacle of oneself, alienating men—as an open challenge to the social roles cut out for women.[155]

[155] For a more detailed account of Russo's argument see the Introduction: "The Theory of The Grotesque."

At this point, before we examine the play, it is perhaps appropriate to look at Renaissance debates on cross-dressing as the play capitalises on these topical debates. In Renaissance culture, with its new rising mercantile class, dress was considered as a means to secure the strictly hierarchical social system and class distinctions. As Jean Howard points out, "the state regulated dress in early modern England, especially in urban settings, precisely to keep people in the social 'places' to which they were born. Elizabethan sumptuary proclamations list those who could wear certain colours (such as purple), certain fabrics (such as silk), and certain adornments (such as spurs, daggers, jewels)."[156] Similarly, gender distinction was defined through dress within the hierarchy of the patriarchal construct.

Consequently to cross-dress was to disturb the social and sexual order that were considered as both natural and divine. It was thus transgressive. The Puritan scholar Philip Stubbs says in his *Anatomy of Abuses* (Stubbs 1583): "Our apparel was given us a sign distinctive to discern betwixt sex and sex, and therefore for one to wear the apparel of another sex, is to participate with the same, and adulterate the verity of his own kind." He grounded his claim on the prohibition at Deuteronomy 22.5: "A woman shall not wear an article proper to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's dress; for anyone who does such things is abomination to the Lord, your God." Fortified with Biblical authority, Puritan moralists attacked theatrical and non-theatrical cross-dressing. Many satires, authored and anonymous pamphlets were also published on the same subject. Among these works perhaps two pamphlets of 1620, namely *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir*, best indicate the debates on dress in seventeenth century England.

Between 1610 and 1620 there was a fashion among women to adopt several items of clothing that were privileged for male use such as feathered hats, doublets, or weapons like swords or daggers. This practice, says Sandra Clark, "provoked an immediate and emotional

[156] Jean E. Howard, "Cross-dressing, the Theatre and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 (1988) 421.

literary response, and the noise of the controversy reverberated in sermons and satires and plays for several years."[157] Indeed many satires violently attacked the "monstrousness of your [women in male dress] deformity in apparel" (*Hic Mulier* A4). The debate about the masculine woman reached its peak in 1620 with the publication of two pamphlets, *Hic Mulier* (or the man-woman) and *Haec Vir* (the womanish-man).[158] What probably prompted these two pamphlets, according to Clark, was King James I's command to the clergy to preach against women who dressed after such a fashion (25 January 1620). John Trundle, a famous publisher of topical tracts, took advantage of the news and published both pamphlets, one after another, within one month of the King's command. Clark claims that most of this controversial literature sprang from the popular appeal of the subject, and that it used conventional arguments about women's dress in general to attack such women. On the other hand, Michael Shapiro suggests that the pamphlets' intention was to satirise the protest of women who aimed "expressly to challenge conventional attitudes towards women."[159] Even though in daily life cross-dressed women on the streets, especially if they were of a lower social and economic status, were generally accused of prostitution—rather than of protest—and tried and prosecuted accordingly,[160] in my view the practice was important in terms of exposing the assumed fixity of social constructs to interrogation.

In these pamphlets the women in man's apparel were considered "neither men nor women, but plaine Monsters" (*Hic Mulier* B1v), "new Hermaphrodites" (*Hic Mulier* C2v), to be condemned. In *Hic Mulier* the pamphleteer emphasises the grotesque nature of women in men's apparel as such:

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157 Sandra Clark, "*Hic Mulier*, *Haec Vir*, and the Controversy over Masculine Women," *Studies in Philology*, 82 (1985) p.158. For detailed account of satires and plays see also Clark 160-167.
158 *Hic Mulier: or the Man-woman and Haec Vir: or the Womanish-man* (Exeter: The Rota, 1973).
159 Michael Shapiro, *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage* (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1994) 20-21.
160 Appendix C of Michael Shapiro's book presents many legal cases taken from the archives of Alderman's Court and Bridewell Hospital. Women caught cross-dressed were accused of prostitution and generally sentenced to "stand on the pillory for two hours in men's apparel," whipped and then confined to Bridewell Hospital for a time.

> You that have made your bodies like antic Boscadge or Crotesco work, not half man/half woman, half fish/half flesh, half beast/half Monster but all Odious, all Devil; that have cast off ornaments of your sexes to put on the garments of Shame… (*Hic Mulier* A4)

Thus in their grotesqueness, these women were considered a challenge to the established norms as they blurred the sartorial markers of gender, that carefully distinguished male from female and secure patriarchal notion of female subordination.

Whether these pamphlets were topical arguments aiming to "capitalise" on the popularity of the subject or works that reflected the contemporary anxieties about the protest of women, they are significant in conveying Renaissance attitudes towards sexuality and gender and in revealing that cross-dressing was a widely discussed and popular topic in early modern England.

Similarly, *The Roaring Girl* is based on this popular topic, deploying a real London cross-dresser, Moll Cutpurse. Contrary to the notorious qualifications of her real counterpart as a pickpocket, prostitute, bawd, and fortune teller, the Moll of the play is presented as a more honest and virtuous person than greedy lords and dissembling rakes. She is often accused with those charges associated with Mary Frith and enjoys these accusations a lot but the dramatists make sure to dissociate her from all these allegations. Moll serves as the satirical instrument in the play challenging conventional prejudices against women. We are not laughing at Moll but rather we are laughing *with* her at others as well as the hypocritical social system in London.

Unlike the heroines in romantic comedies who disguise themselves as boys or pages in order to protect themselves or to be reunited with their lovers, everyone in the play knows that Moll is a woman. Her attire does not serve as a disguise but it is a choice, a life style that she adopts. Her masquerade is an open challenge to the social roles cut out for women. Indeed the social statuses of all the other female characters in the play are defined according to their sexual positions and their patriarchal relations. Mary Fitzallard, the heroine of the romantic young love plot, is the innocent maid and Sir Fitzallard's daughter. Similarly, Mrs. Gallipot

and Mrs. Openwork are married women; thus wives to citizens Gallipot and Openwork. Moll fits neither of these sexual and patriarchal categories. Moreover, she is determined to remain out of the institutions that force her into those categories. She is strong, capable and self sufficient and has no intention to give up all these qualities and be forced into the role of the meek submissive wife that society demands. Here is what she thinks about marriage:

> I have no humour to marry: I love to lie a' both sides a' th' bed myself; and again a' th' other side, a wife, you know, ought to be obedient, but I fear me I am too headstrong to obey, therefore I'll ne'er go about it [...] I have the head now of myself and am man enough for a woman; marriage is but a chopping and changing, where a maiden loses one head and has a worse i' th' place.[161]

This passage clearly relates the sexual to the patriarchal and portrays marriage as an oppressive institution for women. Moll's determination to remain outside the institution of marriage and remain "a man enough for a woman;" in other words, her choice of refusing to fit in easily defined categories, renders her a grotesque "creature" as Sir Alexander Wengrave describes:

> A scurvy woman,…
> a creature…nature hath brought forth
> To mock the sex of woman. It is a thing
> One knows not how to name; her birth began
> Ere she was all made; 'tis woman more than man,
> Man more than woman, and, which to none can hap
> The sun gives her two shadows to one shape;
> Nay, more, let this strange thing walk, stand, or sit,
> No blazing star draws more eyes after it.
> *S. Davy.* A monster! 'tis some monster! (I.ii.127-137)

The description is that of a half formed insect like creature, deformed and equivocal but what makes her more dangerous is that she draws attention to herself. She draws "more eyes" than a comet and she seems to enjoy making a spectacle of herself as she says "I please myself, and care not else who loves me" (V.i.364).

She draws attention to herself not only by cross-dressing, which in itself is considered unnatural and an "abomination" to God, but also by her bold outspokenness. This renders

[161] II.ii.34-42. All the quotations in the play are from *Plays on Women*, eds. Kathleen McLuskie and David Bevington (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Moll an erotically charged figure for many men in the play. As a young unmarried woman she is very outspoken, associates freely with men, drinks, smokes and cants with them. All these indicate an excess of female sexuality in male fantasies. Jean Howard discusses how Moll "is constantly being discussed in erotic terms: as a potential bed mate."[162] The pretentious rake Laxton fantasises of nibbling with her as he thinks "she slips from one company to another, like a fat eel between a Dutchman's fingers" (II.i.188-9). As Moll keeps free company of men and is quite outspoken she is considered as sexually available. Laxton's fantasy reveals this attitude:

> Life, sh'as the spirit of four great parishes, and a voice that will drown all the city; methinks a brave captain might get all his soldiers upon her and ne'er be beholding to a company of Mile End milksops, if he could come on and come off quick enough. (II.i.171-75)

The grotesque association of the mouth with another bodily orifice refers to an insatiable sexual appetite as well as female generative force. Her outspoken lively attitude is taken as a sign of sexual energy with the potential to give birth to as many strong men as the words she voices.[163]

However, Moll's male attire and free speech invokes an excess not only of female sexuality but also an excess of male sexuality which can be seen as threatening. The male attire acts as a grotesque prosthetic device for the penis that Moll adopts. Marjorie Garber claims that "*The Roaring Girl* is a play about the circulation of parts, about women with penises and testicles and men who lack them."[164] For instance, in act two scene two, we see Moll getting measured for a new pair of trousers. The sexual innuendo of the dialogue arises from the puns that associate various items of male dress with the male sexual organ. The tailor tells Moll that the breeches in the new fashion that she ordered will "take up a yard more" and

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162 Jean E. Howard, "Sex and Social Conflict: The Erotics of T*he Roaring Girl*" in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage* ed. Susan Zimmerman (London: Routledge, 1992) 181.
163 The relationship between speech and promiscuity is discussed above in chapter II.
164 Marjorie Garber, "The Logic of the Transvestite: The Roaring Girl 1608," *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass (London: Routledge, 1991) 223.

with this extra yard "it shall stand round and full" (II.ii.90-92). This reference to an extra large and erect penis is a cause of anxiety for men in the play. For instance, when Sir Alexander hears Moll ordering these trousers, he says:

> Hoyda, breeches? What, will he
> marry a monster with two trinkets? What age is this?
> If the wife go in breeches, the man must wear long coats like a fool.
> …..
> […] I have
> brought up my son to marry a Dutch slop and a French
> doublet; a codpiece daughter! (II.ii.81-83, 97-99)

Moll's cross-dressing is a cause for anxiety in the male mind as it destabilizes the gender roles established for men. The excessive sexuality of this "codpiece daughter" with not only one but "two trinkets," ie. having both female and male sexual organs, is overwhelming as it suggests an inversion of gender roles and effeminisation of male sexuality.

This ambivalent situation arises from her grotesque masquerade which simultaneously attracts and repels people and is rather empowering for her. In spite of all the anxieties and fantasies that revolve around her figure, she associates freely with men, never in a sexual manner, but rather as their equal and their friend. She walks in the company of reputable men, knights and lords, as if she is one of them. She is equally comfortable while chatting and canting with thieves and beggars. Moreover, she is not afraid to draw her sword and fight with those who try to take advantage of her or harm her. For instance, while she fights Laxton who tries to seduce her, she gives a long speech about how men try to seduce every woman who "cast a liberal eye" or "amongst company/by chance drink first to [them]" and she says:

> In thee I defy all men, their worst hates
> And their best flatteries, all their golden witchcrafts,
> With which they entangle the poor spirit of fools
> Distressed needlewomen, and trade-fall'n wives.
> Fish that must needs bite or themselves be bitten, […] (III.i.97-101)

In challenging Laxton, she challenges men in general on behalf of all the victimised women who are prey to the seducers' traps due to economic and social misfortunes. The grotesque male attire and fighting skills render Moll a strong defender of women.

As we have seen in Moll's character, the self-embraced grotesquery and masquerade may indeed provide an alternative space for women. It is true that she is deployed as a spectacle in the play; but the play embraces this spectacle as a positive and powerful figure. Thus, contrary to what Russo argues, the ambivalence of grotesqueness can suggest female empowerment even in Renaissance drama, that is centuries before modernity.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study focused on two types of grotesque; one set down by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* and another theorised by Wolfgang Kayser in *Grotesque in Art and Literature.* Although they eventually turn into two very different notions, both concepts of the grotesque argued by Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser emerge from the concept of ambivalence. As discussed earlier, the grotesque images of the former concept are ambivalent in the sense that they are "unfinished," open to the interaction with other bodies and creatures in the world and they are in a constant process of becoming whereas in the latter ambivalence is achieved by turning ordinary objects and living beings into unfamiliar creatures. And one of the claims of this dissertation has been that the Renaissance grotesque in general and the grotesque representations of women in particular are fascinatingly complex because both the Bakhtinian concept of the festive grotesque and the more satirical and sinister forms of grotesque suggested by Kayser can be found in them.

The effects of both concepts are illustrated in the plays discussed. For instance, in *Macbeth* we have seen how early modern grotesque images can threaten to annihilate selfhood which comes very close to the type of grotesque argued by Wolfgang Kayser and at the same time, how in *Bartholomew Fair* the image gets quite close to Bakhtin's sense of the festive grotesque embracing the lower bodily stratum. In fact, in *Bartholomew Fair* the two types of the grotesque merge into each other as the play capitalises on Ursula's grotesque body suggesting interaction with different bodies and the world outside as well as on the uncanny defamiliarisation of commodity fetishism she exploits.

This dissertation has also been an endeavour to point out how, contrary to what some of the feminist critics like Mary Russo claim, the figure of the female grotesque is not specific to modernity but that it existed and suggested a "cultural politics" for women even in a male dominated genre such as the early modern English drama. In order to illustrate this point, two

most common female grotesque figures of the Renaissance have been chosen: the witch and the Amazon. Both being extremely popular for their crowd-pleasing and profit-increasing spectacle, these female grotesque images seem to offer possibilities for inversion of patriarchal assumptions regarding gender roles as they simultaneously exploit and undermine the simplified one-dimensional misogynist myth of the fickle, tempting and dangerously subversive woman. And sometimes the female grotesque representations on stage even offered cultural, social and political commentary.

For instance, we have seen in *The Witch of Edmonton*, how Renaissance playwrights used a female grotesque image to capitalize on the popular interest for maximum profit but how the image at the same time undermined early modern ideas about witchcraft as it called the stereotypical witchcraft superstitions into question. Moreover, the play openly criticised the share that the village community had in creating and branding a witch. In doing so, it turns the female grotesque into social commentary on the economic and power-based dynamics that are involved in the perception of women.

Similarly, Dekker's warrior queen Titania and Shakespeare's "Amazons" Joan of Arc and Margaret illustrate how the female grotesque can have cultural and political implications. Highly grotesque, even demonised, figures of Joan and Margaret do threaten masculine authority but they nevertheless suggest an image of a strong female leader which would have its significations in a country ruled by a female monarch. However, as in the case of Dekker's warrior queen Titania, under a different political climate, literary representations of a strong queen may serve not as royal praise but rather as royal criticism.

Besides these extraordinary spectacles, there is also a more 'ordinary' image in order to show how the female body is always potentially grotesque. The women of the three city comedies I focused on do not have the supernatural powers of a witch or the mythical valour of an Amazon but they share with other female grotesque figures the power to challenge the 'norm' by refusing to settle for the social roles cut out for women.

For instance, in *Epicoene*, Ladies Collegiates refuse to abide to the conventional roles of obedient wife and caring mother. In the new capitalist social order they stopped defining themselves with fertility and reproduction and formed identities based on commodity and consumption. Similarly, *The Roaring Girl* also challenges conventional feminine roles. As we have seen in Moll's character, the self-embraced grotesquery and masquerade may not only serve as an open challenge to the social roles cut out for women but also provide an alternative space for them. It is true that she is deployed as a spectacle in the play; but the play embraces this spectacle as a positive and powerful figure.

As illustrated in the chosen examples, female grotesque characters represented on Tudor and Stuart stages are from various topographical backgrounds and different social strata. They range from poor and aged women occupying the most marginal space of the village community to powerful monarchs, from urbane Londoners to valiant warriors. What they have in common is that they all are labelled with negative epithets such as witches, Amazons, and monsters due to their transgressive character. However, this labelling is not totally disempowering for these women as they openly embraced the grotesque quality and used it to their advantage. Thus, even though earlier grotesque representations of women are mostly spectacles, they are not simply misogynist
portrayals but more complicated images that may have cultural, social and political implications.

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