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Shakespeare's Dowry: Subjectivity and Resistance in The Taming of the Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, and The Merchant of Venice

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SHAKESPEARE'S DOWRY: SUBJECTIVITY AND RESISTANCE IN *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*, *ROMEO AND JULIET*, AND *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE*

By

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Abstract

This dissertation analyzes dowry in three Shakespeare plays—*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. The analysis aims to show that the dowry negotiations and agreements are the most important component of the patriarchal structure of marriage depicted in Shakespeare's plays. Since dowry agreements signal the impending transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert*, they are appropriated by the women in the three plays under consideration as the first stage in a process to assure subjectivity after their marriages. To maintain subjectivity, Katharina, Bianca, Juliet, Portia, and Jessica seek to create and occupy a liminal space between the subjectivity allowed a *feme sole* and the obliteration of the legal and social identity demanded by their new status as *femes covert*. Since dowry negotiations and agreements signal the impending change from subject to object, the women use them as the first stage of opportunity in their quests to maintain subjectivity after marriage.

In the introduction, I provide the theoretical foundation for the feminist reading of the three plays as well as emphasize the importance of dowry to the arranged and companionate marriage in early modern England. In the body of the dissertation, chapters 2 through 5, I analyze dowry's relationship to the arranged and companionate marriages that occur in the plays under consideration. In Chapter Two, I explore the transition from shrew to good wife negotiated by Katharina in her arranged marriage to Petruchio; I also explore the transformation of Bianca from good girl to shrew after her companionate marriage to Lucentio. Chapter Three considers the inherent conflict between the arranged marriage proposed by Juliet's father and her companionate marriage to Romeo. Juliet secretly marries her beloved, but the overwhelming power of the Capulet/ Montague feud leads to the tragic ending of the play. In Chapter Four, I analyze the Dowry Lottery, its mechanics for selecting Portia's ideal husband and its aftermath

as well as Jessica's transformation from Jewish *feme sole* to Christian *feme covert*. I conclude with a discussion Shakespeare's use of dowry as a character development device and to reveal the father's authentic relationships with their daughters.

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Chapter 1: "She is herself a dowry"

--*The Tragedy of King Lear* (1.1.278)

As a feminist scholar of Shakespeare I am enjoined to analyze "the nature and effect of patriarchal structures" in his plays (Lenz, Greene, and Neely 4). Defined as "any . . . social structure run by men," patriarchal structures are composed of economic, political, and religious institutions that are vertically hierarchical, define male power relationships, and provide a mechanism that facilitates the objectification and subjugation of women (Heiland 8). Identifying and analyzing patriarchal structures allows scholars, audiences, and readers to adopt a new perspective of the plays: while Shakespeare's male protagonists receive most of the critical energy and audience attention, the analysis of patriarchal structures reveals women as the most influential characters in three plays—*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

While there are any number of patriarchal structures that we may analyze, marriage is the structure that all of Shakespeare's audiences share. It serves as a transition from adolescence into adulthood and functions as a rite of passage for women and men. For women, marriage determines her "social, domestic and reproduction future" and is "the major defining moment of her life" (Cressy 287). For men, it signifies the attainment of manhood (Panek 49), provides access to additional wealth, increases social status and creates a household. Because it is a microcosm of the macrocosm of economic, social, and political life in early modern England, Shakespeare's contemporaries see the household as "a little commonwealth, by the good government whereof God's glory may be advanced and the commonwealth which standeth of several families benefitted, and all that live in that family receive much comfort and commodity"

(Dod and Cleaver 204). It transforms individuals into couples and creates “the economic and political units basic to society: the household and the family” (Giese 1).

Marriage in Shakespeare

Questions “of marriage and its consequences appear in every Shakespeare play” (Sokol, *Language* 220). His “comedies end with marriages; his history cycles are articulated by marriages; his tragedies begin with marriages, his tragi-comedies are involved in complex negotiations with marriages, and both tragi-comedies and problem plays are habitually judged and generically classified in terms of their portrayal of marriages” (Hopkins 6-7). Because of “compulsory attendance at Sunday services during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” Shakespeare and his contemporaries possessed a comprehensive and “osmotic knowledge of matrimonial law” (Ranald 68). Even in the 21st century, the definitions of a legal marriage and the accompanying legal, economic, and social consequences of those classifications occupy our attention.

The early modern English marriage is made up of a “series of heavily ritualized events” that form a traditional model (Smith 1). This model generally includes the following components: the agreement to wed, financial settlements, a formal sanctification ceremony, and consummation of the union. After agreeing to wed, “it was widely accepted that marriages should be advertised in advance by the calling of banns three times, solemnized in open church by a minister, and recorded in the parish register” (Dolan, *Shakespeare and Marriage* 622). Reading the banns announces the couple’s intent to marry and gives their community an opportunity to register objections to the marriage because of an impediment, such as degree of consanguinity, or the claim of a prior marriage contract

Within this model, the financial settlements are the most important component. With an aristocracy focused on primogeniture and land inheritance and an emerging merchant and artisan middle class determined to increase its wealth and social status, financial arrangements negotiated before marriage become increasingly important. As B.J. and Mary Sokol emphasize in *Shakespeare, Law and Marriage*, "legal records such as wills, and some literary representations, indicate that negotiations over marriage portions were of great importance in early modern England at every social level" (59)¹. Defined as the "money or property the wife brings her husband," dowry is the preferred financial instrument for the aristocratic, merchant, and artisan classes (OED). It is important to the landed aristocracy as a way of insuring the continuation of the family name, the orderly transfer of wealth, as an incentive to marry, and to form social and economic alliances with other aristocratic families. Because early modern England is "decreasingly rural and agrarian and increasingly urban and mercantile," the emerging merchant and artisan middle class adopt dowry for the same reasons that the landed aristocracy found it important with the added benefit that it provided the possibility for upward mobility (McBride 3). Dowry provides aristocrats, merchants, and artisans an acceptable alternative to primogeniture in families without direct male heirs and collateral male lines; daughters are endowed "with lands, property and cash within a social system favoring primogeniture" (Chamberlain 171). Because primogeniture demands that the eldest male child inherit a father's land, dowry allows a family to insure that surviving daughters were not left destitute or suffer economic and social derogation.

Because dowries are exchanged for women, they become the instrument for the systematic and legal transfer of wealth between men. Thus men are exchange partners and

women the gift that is exchanged. Women simultaneously exist as a gift and a form of currency; however, they do not “realize the benefits of their own circulation” (Rubin 399). Dowry establishes a quantifiable monetary value for women allowing them to be transmuted into commodities. This, in turn, transforms women into objects. The father pays the dowry and the prospective husband assures his wife's financial future by acknowledging his obligation under the common law concept of dower and in some cases guaranteeing her a jointure. By Shakespeare's time, a widow, had an “automatic right of ‘dower’ whereby she is ‘seized’ of one third of her husband’s freehold estate for life. This could not be taken from her, waived or undermined, and it needed no specification or contract to protect it” (Macfarlane 282). While dower applies primarily to real property, jointure is a contract negotiated by the prospective husband and the bride’s family “to provide more generous terms for the wife, over and above the common law dower” (Macfarlane 282). Should the husband die, even if the wife returns to her natal family, she would be able to contribute all or part of her maintenance from her dower or jointure.

Dowry in Shakespeare

Shakespeare acknowledges the importance of dowry negotiations and agreements in early modern English marriages; he uses the term "dowry" 24 times in 16 plays, "dowries" and “marriage-dowry” once each and "portion" for “dowry” three times.² Shakespeare shows the importance of dowry for aristocratic and dynastic concerns in his history plays. At the beginning of act 3 of *Henry V*, the Chorus introduces the idea that should the ambassador return from the King of France with an offer of “Katharine his daughter and with her, to dowry, / Some petty and unprofitable dukedoms” (*Henry V* 3.1.31-2); if Henry the “offer likes not, and the nimble gunner

/ With linstock now the devilish cannon touches, / And down goes all before them” (*Henry V* Chorus 34-36). In *King John*, Queen Eleanor urges King John to match his niece with the Dauphin of France with a “dowry large enough, / For by this knot thou shalt so surely tie / Thy now unsured assurance to the crown” (2.1.490-2). He agrees and proposes that his niece’s dowry “shall weigh equal with a queen” (2.1.508). In *1 Henry VI*, Gloucester, to secure peace, “stop effusion of our Christian blood / And stablish quietness on every side” (5.1.9-10) negotiates Henry’s marriage to the Earl of Armagnac’s daughter for “a large and sumptuous dowry” (5.1.20). However, in *King Henry VI, Part 2*, Suffolk negotiates a rival treaty that surrenders “the duchy of Anjou and the county of Maine” and relinquishes any claim to Margaret’s dowry. When King Henry accepts Margaret without a dowry and the newly negotiated marriage settlement, Gloucester is scandalized that the surrendering of the lands and her lack of dowry will be the “Undoing all, as all had never been!” (1.1.108). In *King Lear*, once Lear withdraws Cordelia’s dowry “A third more opulent than” her sisters, the Duke of Burgundy withdraws his offer of marriage (1.1.95).³

Dowry plays a crucial role in the plays featuring the merchant and artisan classes. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Justice Shallow asks Slender “Will you, upon good dowry, marry her?” implying that the size of the dowry determines a woman’s marriageability (1.1.234). The Old Shepherd, in *The Winter’s Tale*, approves of Perdita’s marriage to Florizell by declaring “I give my daughter to him and will make / Her portion equal his” (4.4.444-5). In *Measure for Measure*, Vincentio tells Isabella that Mariana lost “a noble and renowned brother” in a ship wreck, “her marriage dowry,” and any possibility of marrying Angelo (3.1.344-345, 347).⁴ Dowry is so important in *The Merchant of Venice*, that Jessica steals her dowry to marry Lucentio.

Dowry dominates three Shakespeare plays—*The Taming of the Shrew*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. In these plays, a critical analysis of dowry reveals the inherent conflict between the arranged and companionate models of marriage and reveals a more accurate picture of the father/daughter relationships. Most importantly, the patriarchal practice of dowry is appropriated as the first stage of opportunity in the female quests for subjectivity after marriage pursued by Katharina, Bianca, Juliet, Portia, and Jessica.⁵

Arranged and Companionate Models of Marriage

A critical analysis of dowry reveals the essential conflict between the “dominance model” of the arranged marriage and the “conscience model based on” mutual consent of the companionate marriage that Shakespeare and his contemporaries would recognize (Langis 45). There are two ways of contracting a valid marriage in Shakespeare’s England and both could create a valid arranged or companionate marriage. *Verba de presenti* contracts are agreements to marry made in the present tense and “based upon the couple's willing consent to enter into such agreement.” *Verba de futuro* contracts “were legal promises to wed at some specified time in the future, at times contingent upon the realization of a specified set of conditions, such as the receipt of lands and chattels” (Chamberlain 16). Consummation renders all marriages legally irrevocable.

Arranged marriages are the most common; the father (or other male head of household) arranges the marriage between his daughter and an acceptable suitor. The financial conditions are negotiated, agreed to, and ratified in legal documents. Courtship, a sanctification ceremony in church, and consummation follow. While arranged marriages are the dominant practice among the aristocracy, they become increasingly important to the emerging mercantile and artisan

middle class. As a rapidly growing social and economic power, merchants and artisans sought access to the economic and political alliances that strategically arranged marriages provided the aristocracy for centuries: to extend the nuclear patriarchal family and create a network of relational connections that provide a mechanism for forming profitable economic, social and political alliances.

The companionate marriage is the “companionly ideal of marriage.” Based on compatibility and friendship, it is based on “the living embodiment of the Christian ideal of marriage” (Stone 155). While conduct books, the Church of England, and the Protestant reformers encourage couples to marry “of their own free will and not because of parental pressure or social coercion,” the companionate marriage is more idealized than practiced (Callaghan 245). Marriage based on personal choice, “sexual attraction, or romantic love was if anything less likely to produce” a happy marriage “than one arranged by more prudent and more mature heads” (Stone 128). The terms of the courtship, sanctification ceremony, and any financial agreements are negotiated by the couple and challenge the father’s prerogative for arranging a marriage with a suitor that he chooses and negotiating a favorable dowry and jointure.

Dowry negotiations and agreements explain the essential nature of the conflict between these two types of marriage. In the arranged marriage dowry is money, land, or other tangible types of wealth controlled by the father; however, in the companionate marriage, the woman’s dowry is personal, intimate and solely under her control: her hymen. The hymen-dowry symbolizes her virginity and promise of chastity in marriage. Dowry in the arranged marriage is strictly a negotiation between men. Baptista successfully negotiates a dowry for Katharina and

he intends to negotiate an advantageous jointure for his youngest favorite daughter. He tells Gremio and ersatz-Lucentio that the suitor that can assure Bianca of the “greatest dower / Shall have my Bianca’s love” (2.1.363-4).⁶ Capulet invites the County Paris to his “old accustomed feast” to display his wealth and largesse as a preliminary to formal dowry negotiations (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.2.20).⁷ Belmont negotiates Portia’s dowry with the Lottery that he devises before his death.

However, in the companionate marriage, the hymen-dowry negotiations and agreements are restricted to the couple. Bianca ignores Baptista’s efforts and negotiates a companionate marriage with authentic-Lucentio. She bestows her hymen-dowry to the man she chooses in spite of her father’s efforts to select her husband. Juliet, once she learns of her father’s intention of marrying her to Paris, begins her courtship with Romeo, proposes marriage to him, and consummates their nuptials bestowing her hymen-dowry to her beloved. While Bassanio wins the monetary dowry in *Merchant*, Portia retains control of her hymen. She delays consummation of their marriage so that Bassanio can return to Venice to save Antonio and enact her plan to confirm the integrity of her new husband. Only after she tests her new husband’s character, will she allow their marriage to be consummated. After she pays her dowry and converts to Christianity, Jessica marries Lorenzo and they consummate their marriage.

The Father/Daughter Relationship

In the three plays under consideration, Shakespeare uses the dowry negotiations and agreements to reveal an accurate portrait of the father/daughter relationship. Shakespeare's depiction of these relationships reflects the "economic and social realities that historians infer as having dictated family" life and interaction (Boose 325). In *Taming of the Shrew* the dowry

negotiations and agreement between Petruchio and Baptista and ersatz-Lucentio and Baptista present Bianca as the favorite daughter at the beginning of the play. She is “good Bianca” and her father’s “treasure.” Katharina, described as “too rough” and “stark mad or wonderful froward,” appears to be a “shrew indeed, willful, violent and unlikely to promise much happiness to a prospective bridegroom” (Pendlebury 325). When Petruchio presents himself as Katharina’s suitor, Baptista makes no effort to verify his claim that he “bettered rather than decreased” his inherited wealth. When Petruchio announces that his jointure for Katharina is “all my lands and leases whatsoever,” Baptista demands no proof and merely stipulates that he obtain “her love” in exchange for a dowry of one-half his lands after death and “in possession twenty thousand crowns.” However, after ersatz-Lucentio wins the Dowry Auction, Baptista demands proof of Bianca’s dower before he bestows his youngest daughter’s dowry. When ersatz-Lucentio makes “this assurance,” he will be allowed to marry Bianca; if not, Signior Gremio marries her. At the end of the play, Shakespeare uses dowry to emphasize Katharina’s metamorphosis from shrew to good daughter and Baptista’s concomitant change in affections for his daughters. In addition to the wagers she wins for Petruchio from Lucentio and Hortensio, Katharina earns her husband an additional twenty thousand crowns when Baptista presents Petruchio “Another dowry for another daughter” (5.2.118).

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Capulet hopes to use Juliet’s dowry to secure a political and tactical advantage in the feud; just like his sword, Juliet is merely another weapon to wield against Montague. Paris, kinsman to the Prince, is invited to the “old accustomed feast” to meet Juliet, to witness Capulet’s largesse as a host, and to see the Capulet family wealth. While dowry, portion, and jointure are never specifically mentioned in the play, the party suggests the size of

the dowry that Paris can expect when he marries Juliet. The Nurse tells Romeo that any man “that can lay hold of her” (1.5.113) shall receive a sizeable dowry.

At the beginning of *The Merchant of Venice*, the Dowry Lottery appears to be the only practical method to select a husband that Belmont would have approved of had he lived. At the beginning of the play, Portia is commodified as part of the prize package for the lottery winner. She protests to Nerissa that “I may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike. So is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father” (1.2.17-19).⁸ She tells the Prince of Morocco that, “the lott’ry of my destiny / Bars me the right of voluntary choosing” (2.1.15-16). However, as the play progresses, the audience understands that Shakespeare rejects those assumptions. Portia resolutely supports the Dowry Lottery. She declares that “If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana unless I be obtained by the manner of my father’s will” (1.2.78-9). The audience learns that Belmont designed the lottery to insure that the winner is a man that Portia “shall rightly love” (1.2.25). When Shylock learns that Jessica has stolen her dowry and eloped with a Christian, his reaction shows his uncertainty of his affections for Jessica. Confounding his daughter’s value with the money that she has stolen, he moans, “My daughter, O my ducats, O my daughter! / Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats! / Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter” (2.8.15-17). As Solanio reports, “I never hear a passion so confused, / So strange, outrageous, and so variable” (2.8.12-13). Because Jessica “hath the stones upon her, and the ducats,” Shylock demands that a Justice find his daughter and recover his money and jewels (2.8.23). The audience is unclear which Shylock values more.

Katharina, Bianca, Juliet, Portia, and Jessica appropriate dowry as the first stage of opportunity in their quests to maintain subjectivity after marriage. Because the individual quests

occur within the boundaries of an early modern English marriage, they undermine the patriarchal expectation of female obedience and destabilize the presumption of male power. By portraying these quests, Shakespeare subverts the contemporary idealized notion that women are to be chaste, silent, and obedient by creating characters that assume that subjectivity after marriage is possible.

Subjectivity, in early modern England, is allocated to women according to their legal status. As Hogrefe notes “all women were understood to be either married or to be married” and thus are “subjects to their husband” (Hogrefe 97-8). Since women are classified either as *femes sole*, *femes covert*, or widows, the subjectivity available to them changes as their legal status changes. An unmarried young woman as a *feme sole* has the right “to make contracts, to own and dispose of property and to sue or be sued in a court of law” (Froide 15). After marriage, as a *feme covert*, a woman lives “under the authority and protection of her husband . . . having no separate legal identity or rights to her own property” (OED). Further, a married woman is constrained by the doctrine of coverture. This is the “condition or position of a woman during her married life, when she is by law under the authority and protection of her husband” (OED). A wife cannot make a legal contract “except concerning her clothing and food; her earnings were not her own, and she could neither sue nor be sued. Any inheritances of personal property she was due were her husband’s, unless some specific protection had been made” (Mendelson 38). After her husband’s death, a woman becomes a widow with “almost the same rights as men” (Hogrefe 97-8). If a widow remarries, she can select her new husband “without reference to parental wishes in the matter or even counter to them” (Slater 105). In addition, she recovers the right to make contracts, buy and sell real and personal property, and to bring and answer suits in

court. However, once she remarries coverture reactivates and the widow returns to her status of *feme covert*.

Subjectivity in Early Modern England

Shakespeare depicts female characters who seek subjectivity by weakening the objectifying power of coverture by creating and occupying a liminal space between *feme sole* and *feme covert*. This could be accomplished in one of two ways: converting an arranged marriage into a companionate marriage or negotiate a companionate marriage on their own without patriarchal interference. Each appropriates the dowry negotiations or agreement as the first stage in a process to maintain their subjectivity after marriage. If they are to be successful, these quests can only occur within the boundaries of the patriarchal structure of marriage; however, subjectivity is possible for women in early modern England.

While their rights are limited by law and their agency determined by men, social upheaval in early modern England meant that a degree of subjectivity is possible for women. Between 1580 and 1640, early modern England experienced seismic economic, demographic, and political changes that resulted from the "developing capitalist economy characterized by growth and expansion of urban centers" and the "rise of banking and overseas trade; and an increase in manufacturing with its concomitant need for credit and large amounts of capital" (Newman xvii).

The variability of what constitutes a legally valid marriage contributes to the possibility of female subjectivity. Two schools of canonical thought complicate the concept of what formed a binding legal marriage. Adherents of Gratian and the Bolognese school declare that the consent of both parties and consummation are necessary to make a marriage. However, Peter

Lombard and “the Parisian school of canonist” argue that “a contract of marriage could be made in two ways: by *verba de praesenti* or *verba de futuro*. The former, words of present consent, immediately created a valid marriage. Nothing more was needed” (Sokol, *Marriage* 17). The “marriage was transacted between husband and wife; neither a priest nor a lawyer was strictly necessary.” With the “Reformation insistence that marriage was not a sacrament,” more emphasis is placed on the couple “who made the marriage, through vows and sexual consummation, even as the Church of England attempted to exert more control over the sanctification and regulation of marriage” (Dolan, *Shakespeare and Marriage* 622).⁹

Within the early modern English marriage, women experience a “duality of subject positions” that acknowledges that although a wife is subject to her husband under the doctrine of coverture, she also acts as the head of the household” (Hannay 78). She is at times “positioned with the husband as a ‘joint governor’ or companion and sometimes with the children and servants as a subordinate” which complicates “domestic authority and order” (Dolan, *The Taming of the Shrew* 167). As Catharine Belsey declares, these “subject-positions offered to the same woman, cannot be held simultaneously without contradiction” (*The Subject of Tragedy* 155). It is the inherent contradiction between subject positions that allow the possibility for female subjectivity. Since the “notion that a woman was the property of her father was being challenged, so too was the assumption that a wife was owned by her husband” and entirely under his authority (Bailey 70).

Another factor contributing to the possibility of subjectivity comes from early seventeenth-century preachers and their insistence that companionship in marriage is the essential component. While the “power of the patriarchy was firmly intact, the role in this

system assigned to the wife was ameliorated in some instances by the emergent concept of the companionate marriage” (Lenker 17-18). This ideal creates a relationship between husband and wife that is “one of mutual love” (Crawford 39). Parents are encouraged to approve their children’s “choices of marriage partners” and discouraged from forcing “marriages upon them” (Crawford 39). The authors of marriage and conduct manuals, as well as “the playwrights who were their contemporaries, insist that no one should force marriage upon children or servants” (Peters 87). As Crawford maintains, the companionate marriage “was the ideal, with the husband and wife sharing spiritual and family concerns in loving harmony” (39). However, this undermined “their own arguments in favour of the maintenance of strict wifely subjection and obedience” (Stone 217).

The conflict between the “legal fiction” of coverture and “social fact” of common law rights of women allowed married women to retain a degree of subjectivity as *femes covert* (Kesselring 92). On her marriage, ownership of a woman’s personal and real property transferred to her husband. As a *feme covert*, a wife was not liable for her husband’s debts; however, “a husband could be liable for his wife’s debts” and was legally obligated to “maintain his wife” (Sokol, *Marriage* 120). Marriage settlements negotiated and agreed to before marriage regarding property ownership took precedence over the demands of coverture and allowed women to preserve ownership of real property as “a wife’s separate estate” (Sokol, *Marriage* 124). In addition, “legal jurisdictions other than common law, especially equity and ecclesiastical law” provide *femes covert* “alternative avenues to protect their legal rights to property” (Moore 113). Another factor that diminished the power of coverture over women is that, “According to 34 &

35 Hen. VIII, c. 5, a married woman was permitted to make a will” (Mendelson and Crawford 38).

Finally, a man could legally transfer a portion of his subjectivity to his wife by allowing her to work in a trade, participate in law suits, make financial contracts, and conduct other business transactions. In London, for example, a *feme sole merchant* is allowed to “hold property and trade in her own name, provided she practiced a different trade from that of her husband” (Sokol, *Marriage* 123).

Marriage and Subjectivity

Arranged marriages dominate *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. In these plays, Shakespeare depicts success or failure of the individual quests for female subjectivity in the denouement. His contemporary audience would understand that while women could not be emancipated or achieve equality, it is possible to achieve a degree of subjectivity, as long as the quests are contained within the boundaries of acceptable husband and wife behavior required by contemporary cultural expectations and rules of conduct demanded of early modern English marriages. Since the dowry agreement signaled the transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert* and the activation of coverture, the women in the plays under consideration appropriate dowry as the first stage of their quests.

Shakespeare's creates individualized quests that share common elements. At the beginning of each play, the women do not appear to have even a modicum of subjectivity. Their choices of a husband appear to be controlled by their fathers. Baptista arranges Katharina's marriage to Petruchio before the couple meet; he plans to auction Bianca's jointure and arrange her subsequent marriage to the highest bidder. Capulet negotiates the courtship and marriage

between a kinsman to the Prince of Verona and Juliet. Portia's husband is the winner of a Dowry Lottery designed by her dead father and Shylock controls Jessica's access to the outside world and assumes that he will find a suitable husband for his daughter.

Each woman's physical movements are restricted. Shakespeare's audience only sees Katharina indoors or attended by her father or her husband. Juliet's movements are strictly monitored and actively controlled by her mother and Nurse; she is even required to seek permission to go to confession. Before her marriage, as one of the prizes and mistress of ceremonies for the Dowry Lottery, Portia is a hostage in Belmont. Shylock warns Jessica to lock the doors after he leaves, not to "thrust you head into the public street" and do not let "the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter / My sober house" (*Merchant* 2.5.31, 34-5).¹⁰

The women in the plays under consideration appear to accept their lack of subjectivity. After learning that her father "hath consented / That you shall be my wife" and her dowry "greed on," Katharina's silence signals consent for her arranged marriage to Petruchio (2.1.262-3). Juliet implies that she will be guided by her mother as the County Paris's courtship begins; she tells Lady Capulet that she will "no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make if fly" (1.3.99-100). Portia tells the Prince of Morocco that "the lott'ry of my destiny / Bars me the right of voluntary choosing" (2.1.15-16). Jessica betrays no hint of her plan to steal Shylock's ducats and jewels and abscond with Lorenzo.

Since "the subject has been conceptualized as inherently masculine and thus has been a significant factor in maintaining the inferior status of women" (Hekman 45), and because "sexual inversion" could "widen behavioral options for women within and even outside of marriage," the female characters under examination undergo a process of masculinization (Davis 129, 131).

Using male rhetorical gestures and cross-dressing as men allows them to assume male attitudes; by appearing as men or performing male actions, the women temporarily reverse female and male roles (Davis 129). In act 2, scene 1, Katharina assumes the masculine prerogative of physically correcting the behavior of an unruly woman, binding her sister's hands, and striking her until she reveals which suitor Bianca "lov'st best." At the end of *Taming*, Bianca assumes a masculine role in her marriage. She refuses Lucentio's summons to attend him and scoffs at Katharina's obedience to Petruchio as a "foolish duty." By proposing marriage to Romeo, Juliet claims her father's right to select a suitable husband and appropriates his right to bestow her virginity on the man she chooses as her husband. Even before disguising herself as Balthasar, Portia uses masculine language to assume a dominant masculine role in her marriage. After learning of Antonio's misfortune, she orders Bassanio to accompany her to church, to conclude their marriage ceremony, and then to leave immediately for Venice to save his friend; Portia exercises the male prerogative of controlling female sexuality by delaying the consummation of their marriage. Jessica, assuming the male role, plans her escape with Lorenzo even designing the method that her beloved "shall take her from her father's house" (2.4.30).

Katharina, Juliet, and Portia deliver submission speeches that acknowledge obedience to their husbands and acceptance of coverture. Katharina closes her submission speech by placing her hand below Petruchio's foot in "token of duty, if he please, / My hand is ready, may it do him ease" (5.2.182-3). Juliet informs Romeo that she will "all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay" (2.2.147). Bassanio wins the Dowry Lottery, Portia declares that "this same myself / Are yours, my lord's" (3.2.170-1). However, all three speeches are ironic; their submission before witnesses is one of the stages of opportunity that the women use in their quests to maintain

subjectivity after marriage. While not performing a formal submission speech, Bianca and Jessica signal their submission to male authority. After Baptista tells his daughter to “get you in,” Bianca complies, declaring “Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe” (1.1.75, 81). Jessica, although embarrassed by her masculine costume, accedes to Lorenzo’s demand that she be his torchbearer at Bassanio’s feast.

The women use language to maintain subjectivity. The early modern English woman is enjoined to be “chaste, submissive, silent, inferior to men” (Burke 118). Men, as “superiors” in an asymmetrical power relationship, enjoy “*absolute power*” over their wives by controlling their “goals and behaviour . . . by means of authority, force, persuasion and manipulation.” Women, as “inferiors,” enjoy “*relative power* in so far as they are able to control the goals and behavior of their superiors through persuasion and manipulation” (Calvo 2). The type and amount of power available to women is based on “assumptions about what it means to be masculine or feminine and to the relative power that accrues to these implicit definitions of gender” (Erickson 819). By asserting their right to rhetorical equality, women claim access to absolute power. Because “power relations are present in most social encounters and language plays an important part in social interactions,” language allows Katharina, Bianca, Juliet, Portia, and Jessica to maintain subjectivity after their respective marriages (Calvo 1). Katharina uses the language of submission to deflect Petruchio’s insistence on taming her. While traveling to Bianca’s wedding, Katharina appears to surrender to Petruchio’s taming. After Petruchio declares that it is not the sun, but it is the moon and then claims that it is the sun again, Katharina declares:

Then God be blest, it is the blessed sun.
But sun it is not, when you say it is not,
And the moon changes even as your mind.
What you will have it named, even that it is,
And so it shall be so for Katharine. (4.5.18-22)

With her submission speech at the end of the play, Katharina appropriates the title of the good daughter from Bianca and wins an additional 20,000 crowns for Petruchio increasing his social status and wealth. Bianca, performing the role of the “good Bianca” (1.1.76), is noted for her “silence,” “mild behavior and sobriety” (1.1.70-71). When Bianca does speak, she employs submissive language that conceals her authentic sense of self. She tells Katharina “what you will command me will I do / So well I know my duty to my elders” (2.1.6-7). However, at the end of the play, her refusal to obey her husband and her language reveal that her authentic personality is that of the real shrew in the play. Juliet vows to Romeo that after their marriage she will “follow thee my lord throughout the world” Yet, she consistently resists Romeo’s attempts to objectify her with Petrarchan language. Juliet responds to Romeo’s insistence that he has profaned the “holy shrine” of her hand with his touch by declaring that since “saints have hands that pilgrims’ hands do touch, / And palm to palm is holy palmers’ kiss” that he wrongs his “hand too much” (1.5.94-96). Portia publicly acknowledges Bassanio's authority as her husband and announces: “Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours / Is now converted (3.2.166-7). Nevertheless, she ignores his authority with language that reveals that she controls the wealth of Belmont. After learning of Antonio’s forfeited three thousand ducat bond, Portia orders her new husband to pay “six thousand and deface the bond / Double six thousand and treble that” (3.2.297-8). Jessica is

described as “a gentle and no Jew;” (2.6.52) however, Lorenzo reveals that she is the one that plans their elopement.

Language and Subjectivity

Men in the plays reinforce the objectification of women by using specific types of discourse to support a patriarchal ideology that portrays women as either sex objects or objects of adoration. Shakespeare’s male characters principally use two discursive traditions to describe, talk about, and talk to women: the “anti-romantic” Ovidian and “romantic” Petrarchan (Gajowski 18). Ovidian discursive practice “objectifies women by denigrating them” while Petrarchan discourse “objectifies women by idealizing them” (Gajowski 19). Petruchio travels to Padua to “wive and thrive” and after successfully negotiating the dowry and jointure for Katharina; he converts her into his “goods” and “chattels.” When Romeo first sees Juliet he exclaims that “she doth teach the torches to burn bright! / It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night / As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear” (1.5.41-3). Bassanio’s reaction when he uncovers Portia’s portrait is a blazon of her face: her “severed lips” were opened “with sugar breath;” he likens her hair to a “golden mesh” that would “entrap the hearts of men” (3.2.118, 119, 122-3). Neither discursive tradition “allows for the possibility of a mutual relationship between two whole selves” (Gajowski 85).

Because “to be a subject is to speak, to identify with the ‘I’ of an utterance, to be the agent of action inscribed in the verb,” language is the instrument that the women use in their quests to maintain their subjectivity (Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy* 5). Since subjectivity is “discursively produced” and “constrained by the range of subject-positions available” within specific modes of discourse, Shakespeare’s women use language that oppose Ovidian and

Petrarchan discursive ideology (Belsey *The Subject of Tragedy*, 5). Women in the plays under consideration employ Affective discourse to disrupt language that objectifies and subjugates them. This is the language of equals in marriage with both women and men occupying subject positions that leads to the “mutual realization of the self and other” (Gajowski 16). They teach their husbands to exchange Ovidian and Petrarchan discourse for language that reshapes the ideology of how husbands value wives. Affective discourse represents the language of difference to these two objectifying forms of male language, acknowledges equality, and supports female subjectivity.¹¹

By claiming rhetorical equality, Katharina, Portia and Juliet claim social equality. Speaking allows them “to take part in the contest for meaning which issues in the production of new subject-positions, new determinations of what it is possible to be” (Belsey, *The Subject of Tragedy*, 6). Since women, “were defined in relation to men and in terms of their relations with men,” subjectivity in the three plays is restricted to married life and the household (Belsey, *Disrupting Sexual Difference*, 171). It was “in the bosom of the family” that the women could occupy subject positions (Belsey, *Disrupting Sexual Difference*, 192). “To have a place in discourse, even a domestic one” was to appropriate a “subject-position from which to speak” and however inadequate, it allows them a place from which to claim rhetorical equality (Belsey, *Disrupting Sexual Difference*, 193).

Karen Neman articulates the dangers of rhetorical equality between women and men in *Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama*. She describes the insistence on rhetorical equality as “a usurpation of multiple forms of authority” including the patriarchal dominance of the early modern English household, which in turn threatens “order and male

sovereignty.” This undermines “masculine control of commodity exchange” required by the practice of dowry, dower, and jointure in the early modern English marriage model. Also, this threatens the male desire for hegemonic domination in the control of female sexuality. As Newman observes “The extent of this perceived threat may be gauged by the strict delegation of the talking woman to the carefully defined and delimited spheres of private and domestic life in which the husband was exhorted to rule” (134).

The Nature of Resistance

In the three plays under consideration, Shakespeare depicts a patriarchal ideology that displays its unfailing “need to maintain and renew” its domination of women (Erickson 819). Every threat to the androcentric power model in marriage means that the patriarchy must respond to a “series of challenges and crises” that emphasizes how “unstable it is” (Erickson 819). If a woman displays even a modicum of subjectivity, she is punished. However, by exploiting the patriarchy’s instability, its “own internal ambiguities and contradictions,” women create a liminal space between *feme sole* and *feme covert*, between subject and object, where “subversive ideas and dissident behavior” lead to effective resistance (Mendelson and Crawford 73).

To maintain their subjectivity after marriage, each woman must resist the social and economic obliteration of the female self that coverture requires. This creates reciprocity between the pursuit of subjectivity and the resistance required to insure their quests succeed; their pursuit is directly proportional to their resistance: the more subjectivity the women wish to claim, the more effective and intense must their resistance be. However, overt resistance to patriarchal authority is futile and potentially dangerous. Katharina actively resists being labeled a shrew at the beginning of *Taming*. She is described as “too rough” and “this fiend from hell.” Gremio

wants “To cart her, rather” than marry her (1.1.55).¹² Even her father calls her “thou hilding of a devilish spirit!” (2.1.26). Capulet’s response to Juliet’s desire to delay her marriage to Paris is swift and potentially violent. He warns that if she does not “go with Paris to Saint Peter’s church,” he “will drag thee on a hurdle thither” (3.5.154-5). Capulet threatens to strike Juliet, declaring at one point in his denunciation of his daughter’s hesitation to marry, “My fingers itch” (3.5.164).¹³ Portia understands that her direct intervention as a woman in the Venetian civil courts is forbidden; therefore, she plans to save Antonio “accoutered” as a young man (*Merchant* 3.4.63). On learning that Jessica has eloped, subverting his prerogative to arrange her marriage to a suitable Jewish husband, Shylock wails “I would my daughter were dead at my foot and the jewels in her / ear; would she were hearsed at my foot and the / ducats in her coffin” (3.1.66-8).

Covert Resistance

Katharina, Bianca, Juliet, Portia, and Jessica adopt forms of covert resistance to insure the success of their quests. This allows them to pursue subjectivity and not appear as threats to masculine authority or trigger male anxiety about disobedient wives and its association with “the obsessive Renaissance fear of sexual betrayal and of cuckoldry” (Hopkins 14). Covert resistance allows them to appear to occupy roles that the patriarchy does not perceive as threatening: sexual objects, housekeepers, and breeders of sons; meanwhile, they are free to pursue their quest for subjectivity

They also must adapt their resistance to the stages of opportunity that occur in the respective plays. While their methods are individualized, their resistance shares common traits. The women make gestures of obedience during the course of the play. Katharina performs four gestures in *Taming*: her silence after learning that she has been betrothed to Petruchio; silently

continuing with the marriage ceremony despite Petruchio's outrageous behavior, the sun and moon speech, and her submission speech at the end of the play. Bianca appears as the classical male fantasy of the chaste, silent, obedient, and submissive woman, telling Baptista "Sir, to you pleasure humbly I subscribe" (1.1.81). Once her secret marriage is discovered in act 5, Bianca kneels before Baptista and implores "Pardon, dear father (5.1.87). Juliet announces that she will only "consent" to Paris's courtship, if her mother approves (1.3.100) and later she tells the Nurse "Go in and tell my lady I am gone; / Having displeas'd my father, to Lawrence' cell / To make confession and to be absolved" (3.5.233-5). After Bassanio wins the Dowry Lottery, Portia announces "Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours / Is now converted" (3.2.166-7). After being summoned by Shylock, Jessica asks "What is thy will?"

Each quest resists the doctrine of a competing patriarchal structure. Katharina challenges the demand that women be chaste, silent, and obedient. Bianca opposes the arranged marriage envisioned by her father. Juliet resists the demands of the feud, her arranged marriage in support of the feud, and her beloved's insistence in using Petrarchan language to objectify her as a site of worship. Portia contests the authority of the Venetian civil court as a male power center and her new husband's homosocial friendship bonds with Antonio and their friends. Jessica denies the faith of her father and prevents Shylock from arranging an advantageous marriage with an acceptable Jewish husband.

In Chapter 2, "The Anger of My Heart," I analyze Katharina's quest for subjectivity after her arranged marriage and the impediments that she overcomes to successfully conclude her quest. Shakespeare's portrayal of Bianca's quest highlights the conflict between an arranged

marriage concluded by her father with ersatz-Lucentio and her own negotiations for the companionate marriage she arranges with authentic-Lucentio.

Chapter Three, “Prodigious birth of love,” studies Juliet as she simultaneously resists the arranged marriage demanded by her father, the feud, and her need to teach Romeo to use Affective discourse to insure the success of her quest.

Chapter Four, “A Lady Richly Left,” examines Portia’s pursuit of subjectivity after her marriage to Bassanio. While the bonds negotiated by Bassanio, Antonio, and Shylock are important, the audience would recognize the Dowry Lottery as the most important bond in the play. Shakespeare uses Jessica’s stolen dowry to graphically portray the conflict between the arranged and companionate marriage in early modern England as well as the potential instability of a woman’s essential sense of self in her pursuit of subjectivity in two oppressive patriarchal environments.

I conclude with Chapter 5, “Now I play a merchant’s part,” revealing how Shakespeare uses dowry in the plays under consideration to develop character complexity of the four fathers and their authentic relationships with their daughters.

Chapter 2: “The Anger of My Heart”

--*The Taming of the Shrew* (4.3.77)

The Taming of the Shrew is a play entirely about marriage. Marriage is the primary metaphor that sustains the action of the play and provides the framework within which Shakespeare develops the main characters. The audience witnesses the arranged marriage of Katharina and Petruchio main plot, the Bianca and Lucentio companionate marriage secondary plot, as well as the Hortensio and Widow subplot within the play’s five acts. Even the rarely performed Induction has marriage as one of its central elements.

Shakespeare portrays the two predominant types of marriage in early modern England: the arranged marriage of Katharina and Petruchio and the companionate marriage of Bianca and Lucentio. While “most plays rely on compression” or abridgment, Shakespeare provides “a full, if parodic, treatment of the step-by-step” stages of the arranged marriage in *Taming* (Cook 183). In the opening act of the play, Baptista searches for a suitable husband for Katharina. He is so intent on finding an acceptable match for his eldest daughter that he coerces Gremio and Hortensio to help in his search for a prospective son-in-law. Because he is adamant in his refusal to allow Bianca to wed until he has a husband for Katharina, his two friends temporarily suspend their rivalry for the fair and desirable younger daughter and combine their resources “helping Baptista's eldest daughter to a husband” (1.1.131-2).

Once an acceptable prospect is found, the future son-in-law must meet explicit social criteria. A suitor must provide clear evidence of his family background. Since he knows and loves Hortensio and Gremio “well” (1.1.53), Baptista gives his permission for either of his friends to court Katharina. When Baptista first meets Petruchio, he asks for a formal declaration of his family background. Petruchio replies “Petruchio is my name, Antonio’s son / A man well

known throughout all Italy” (2.1.67-8). Baptista acknowledges Petruchio’s lineage and welcomes him. Petruchio understands that he also must provide evidence of his financial resources. He tells Baptista, “You knew my father well, and in him me, / Left solely heir to all his lands and goods, / Which I have bettered rather than decreased” (2.1.112-5).

The next step in arranging a marriage is the most important: the dowry offer and acceptance. Should an acceptable offer not be tendered or accepted, there would be no marriage. After Petruchio accepts Katharina’s dowry and Baptista agrees to Petruchio’s offer of jointure of all his “lands and leases whatsoever” (2.1.121), Petruchio demands that “specialties be therefore drawn between us, / That covenants may be kept on either hand” (2.1.122-3). Only after the dowry offer is accepted, Katharina meets her new husband. Shakespeare’s audience understands that the conclusion of the dowry negotiations creates a *de facto* marriage and the importance of Petruchio’s declaration to Katharina that “in plain terms: your father hath consented / That you shall be my wife your dowry greed on; / And will you, nill you, I will marry you” (2.1.262-4).

Once the dowry is agreed to, the future bride and groom begin their formal courtship. Petruchio’s courtship of Katharina is contentious, filled with verbal jousting, and brief. When Baptista returns to see how Petruchio’s courting has fared, he ignores his daughter’s protests and, joining the couple’s hands, announces, “‘Tis a match” (2.1.312); Gremio and Tranio proclaim “Amen, say we. We will be witnesses” (2.1.313). Baptista completes the civil marriage of Petruchio and Katharina by handfasting.¹ Only the sanctification ceremony in church remains to make the marriage indissoluble.

The audience also witnesses the two final stages of the early modern English marriage model: the religious solemnization and the wedding feast to publicly celebrate the sanctified

nuptials. Although Petruchio subverts the religious ceremony with his outrageous apparel and crude behavior, the solemnization is complete and, even though the bride and groom are absent, the wedding feast is held. Once consummated, the marriage is irrevocable.

While not as prevalent as the arranged marriage, the audience would recognize that Bianca and Lucentio negotiate a companionate marriage. They are not bound by the same social conventions as the older and more conventional Katharina and Petruchio. They abandon all social practices and cultural mandates of the arranged marriage to choose whom they court and wed. While the primary motivations of an arranged marriage focus on social and economic considerations (particularly the dowry), companionate marriage emphasizes the affective relations between the couple.

The visual, verbal and emotional responses between the man and the woman are more significant than the economic and social considerations of the arranged marriage. Lucentio succumbs to love at first sight when he sees Bianca. As they watch the tableau before Baptista's house unfold, Tranio sees that his master has fallen in love and is astonished that "love should of a sudden take such hold" (1.1.139). He tells Tranio "till I found it to be true, / I never thought it possible or likely" (1.1.140-1). Lucentio understands that Bianca must love him as well before they can marry; therefore, he devises an elaborate scheme to court Bianca, fool her father, outwit his rivals, and marry his beloved. While Bianca's response is cautious at the beginning of act 3, she too has fallen in love by act 4 and agrees to marry Lucentio.

Dowry is also central to the companionate marriages. While the companionate marriage disregards an economic dowry, the couple negotiates a dowry that they consider more important. Bianca understands that as a *feme sole* who seeks a companionate marriage, the only wealth that

she can use as a dowry is her virginity embodied in her hymen. She rejects all socially mandated conditions for finding a suitable husband and only allows herself to be courted by the Lucentio. Most importantly, she resists the culturally imposed demand that a suitable monetary dowry be negotiated between men before a marriage can take place. She negotiates her own and personally inimitable dowry. Bianca's hymen-dowry is a symbol of her virginity and the promise of chastity within marriage.

Katharina

There are two conflicting views of women in *The Taming of the Shrew* that shape Katharina's quest to maintain her subjectivity after marriage. The male view is that female subjectivity does not exist. Before marriage, a woman's care and maintenance are her father's responsibility; after marriage, her body is integrated into her husband's legal body under the doctrine of coverture. As Unhae Langis emphasizes, under common law "the legal personhood of marriage obtained solely in the man, and the woman, through coverture, became civilly dead" (45). This results in an idealized and objectified notion of female conduct where good women were "chaste, submissive, silent, inferior to men" (Burke 118). At the beginning of the play Bianca epitomizes this ideal. Lucentio notes her "silence," "mild behavior," and "sobriety" (1.1.70-1). She is "Sweet Bianca" loved by Hortensio and Gremio (1.1.133). Bianca participates in her objectification by telling her father "to your pleasure humbly I subscribe. / My books and instruments shall be my company, / On them to look and practice by myself" (1.1.81-83). Good women exist as mythologized objects. Bianca spoke like "Minerva" (1.1.84) and was more beautiful than Agenor's daughter Europa who humbled Jove "to her hand" (1.1.161).²

At the beginning of the play, Katharina represents the view that subjectivity can only be maintained by resisting male prerogatives that construct and enforce standards of female conduct with overt acts of resistance. She resists Gremio's wish to "cart" her because she is too "rough" and demands that her father defend her honor. She challenges Hortensio's admonishment to conform to a "gentler, milder mold" by threatening to hit him in the head "with a three-legged stool" and to "paint" his face by scratching him with her fingernails (1.1.64-5). This threat to use violence "suggest a subversion of gender roles wherein she would take a dominant position" (Kingsbury 70).

Katharina's subjectivity and her concomitant resistance to patriarchal expectations for correct female conduct are shaped by four social forces. First, is her status as a *feme sole*. While she does have certain legal rights, she is in reality under the authority of her father. Baptista can offer her in marriage to either Gremio or Hortensio without her approval. Katharina upbraids her father because she views this as a form of prostitution. She demands, "is it your will / To make a stale of me amongst these mates?" (1.1.57-8). She refuses to be bartered on the street as a common whore by her father.

Additionally, Katharina's subjectivity is shaped by the male response to her behavior. Since she refuses to conform to the patriarchal expectation that women are good if they are silent, she is demonized. Hortensio prays that God deliver men "From all such devils" (1.1.66). Katharina is "a fiend from hell" that must "bear the penance of her tongue" (1.1.88-9). She is "intolerable curst" (1.2.83); Baptista calls his eldest daughter a "hilding of a devilish spirit" (2.1.26). Men shun Katharina for her outspoken confrontational conduct. When Katharina declares that Bianca's modesty is an act, Baptista ignores her. Later in act 1, scene 1, he tells

Katharina that she may stay outside since he has “more to commune with Bianca” (1.1.101). Baptista exits immediately without waiting for her reply.

Finally, sibling rivalry affects her subjectivity. Baptista expresses his disapproval of Katharina’s behavior by publicly declaring his preference for his younger daughter. He tells “good Bianca” that despite Katharina’s behavior that he “will love thee ne’er the less, my girl” (1.1.-76-7). Bianca reinforces the rivalry with her disobedient older sister by playacting the role of the good daughter. Katharina’s marriage anxiety is a further manifestation of her rivalry with Bianca. Baptista’s insistence that Katharina marries before Bianca “draws attention to her as potentially unmarriageable” and reinforces her rivalry with her younger sister (Kingsbury 72). Katharina fears public humiliation should Bianca marry first. She tells Baptista that “now I see / She is your treasure, she must have a husband; / I must dance barefoot on her wedding day, / And for your love to her lead apes in hell” (2.1.31-4).

Shakespeare uses language as Katharina’s primary means of claiming subjectivity and resisting patriarchal authority, particularly “the role in patriarchal culture to which women are assigned, that of wife and object of exchange in the circulation of male desire” (Newman, *Essaying Shakespeare* 39-40). Since men in the play assume that they control the terrain of language and silence is the space allotted to women, Katharina breaches the male space and engages in a series of verbal confrontations to safeguard her subjectivity. Not only does she employ language to resist demonization, Katharina uses it to maintain her right to choose a husband. As she declares, though marriage “is not halfway to her heart” (1.1.62), she reserves the right to marry whom she will. Additionally, Katharina uses physical violence to resist assaults on her subjectivity. She tells Baptista “I’ll be revenged” on Bianca and attempts to

attack her sister (2.1.29). She breaks a lute over Hortensio's head when he "bowed her hand to teach her fingering" (2.1.146) and she strikes Petruchio during their courtship, prompting him to warn "I'll cuff you if you strike again" (216). Katharina beats Grumio in Act 4 when he refuses to bring her food.

Katharina defies all patriarchal demands of obedience. When Baptista tells Katharina to "stay" since he has "more to commune with Bianca" (1.1.100-1), before following them inside she replies:

Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not?

What! shall I be appointed hours,

As though, belike, I knew not what to take,

And what to leave? Ha! (1.1.02-5)

She immediately follows her father and sister into their house. At the beginning of Act 2, Baptista tells Katharina to "ply thy needle" and cease her physical and verbal assault on her sister. Kate's response is another physical attack on Bianca (2.1.25).

During Petruchio's wooing the audience witnesses a transformation in Katharina's view of her subjectivity. She learns that her marriage has been arranged. This marks her transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert* and requires that she adapt to a new reality that accommodates her change in legal and social status. She must safeguard her subjectivity from the legal eradication of women demanded by coverture and resist Petruchio's attempts to tame her.³

Shakespeare details Petruchio's plan to tame Katharina; he will contradict all her expressions of subjectivity. He will eschew violence and adopt a "kinder, gentler mode of

domestic discipline” (Dolan 16). While waiting for Katharina to arrive, Petruchio reveals his taming plan. He declares that:

I'll attend her here
And woo her with some spirit when she comes.
Say that she rail, why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale.
Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly washed with dew.
Say she be mute and will not speak a word,
Then I'll commend her volubility
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence.
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,
As though she bid me stay by her a week.
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day
When I shall ask the banns and when be married. (2.1.164-176)

Petruchio's taming requires deflecting unpleasant language, ignoring scornful looks and disapproving silences with an “aggressive refusal to engage with her” (Dolan 17). This is the first direct sustained assault on Katharina's subjectivity.

Unaware that her dowry has been agreed to and that her father has approved their marriage, Katharina resists Petruchio wooing with methods that have been successful in the past. She uses language to oppose his effort to marginalize her and discourage his attempts to construct her as a sex object. When Katharina enters the room, Petruchio attempts to devalue her

by using the diminutive form of her name. Petruchio peremptorily contradicts her assertion “They call me Katharine that do talk of me” (2.1.180) as a “lie” (2.1.181). He insistently uses the diminutive “Kate” as a basis for the puns and wordplay that seek to subvert any expressions of individuality that her complete given name represents. To Petruchio, she is “plain Kate,” “bonny Kate” and “Kate the curst” (2.1.181-2). While she is the “prettiest Kate in Christendom” and “Kate of Kate Hall,” she is merely Petruchio’s “superdainty Kate” (2.1.183-4). Since “dainties are all Kates,” she is a delicacy for him to enjoy whenever he chooses (2.1.185).

In the verbal jousting that follows, Katharina shifts Petruchio’s sexual puns to metaphors that suggest that he is a rustic and consequently her social inferior. Shakespeare uses “sexual inversion” to reverse traditional female/male roles in the couple’s courtship, permitting Katharina to assume a masculine persona (Davis 129). She tells Petruchio that he is a “joint stool” (2.1.194) implying that he is an inferior, crudely made, rustic piece of furniture. He agrees that he is a stool and invites her to “sit on me” (2.1.194). Katharina ignores this invitation to sexual dalliance and shifts the metaphor again. She says that “Asses are made to bear and so are you” (2.1.195). As an ass, Katharina transforms Petruchio into “the primary emblem for the dutiful servant” and “a key erotic symbol, which appeared frequently in not only the public discourse of male dominance but also in the private language of male desire” (Bailey 67). Petruchio could only “bear” Katharina if he were an ass with her sitting on his back controlling him with a bridle. She simultaneously objectifies him as a servant and as an erotic symbol that she controls. Petruchio’s response is another attempt to marginalize Katharina as simply a female body. He reminds her that women are made to “bear” men to satisfy them sexually and they are made to “bear” children (2.1.196). Katharina shifts his metaphor by inferring that Petruchio will

not bear her because he is a “jade” (2.1.197), and as “an ill conditioned horse,” he cannot bear her weight (Dolan 79). Petruchio, unable to match Katharina’s verbal resourcefulness, tells her that he will not “burden” (2.1.198) her since she is “young and light” (2.1.199). His implication is that Katharina is simultaneously “young,” inexperienced in love, (OED) and “light,” that is, sexually lascivious (Dolan 79). Katharina replies that she is “as heavy as my weight should be” (2.1.201), declaring that she is as serious and chaste as the occasion demands.⁴

Katharina’s wasp/sting/penis metaphor and bawdy word play undermine Petruchio’s earlier sexually charged innuendos and allows her to deflect his attempts to marginalize her. Petruchio displays his impatience to her “should be” by punning on “bee” as “Should—buzz” (2.1.202). Katharina shifts his expression of impatience to marginalize him as a “buzzard” (2.1.202). Petruchio tries to objectify Katharina, telling her that she is too “angry” and calls her a “wasp” (2.1.205). Since wasp denotes a “waspish, scolding woman” (Dolan 80), Petruchio struggles to reinscribe her objectification as a shrew. Katharina continues the metaphor that masculinizes her as the wasp by warning him to “best beware my sting” (2.1.206). Katharina converts “my sting” to my penis, symbolically transforming his tongue into a vagina. Petruchio resists her assumption of male sexual dominance by declaring that his “remedy is then to pluck it out” (2.1.207). This will castrate Katharina, reverse the sexual-inversion, and restore the normal sexual order of male dominating female. She reinforces her sexual-inversion taunting Petruchio as a “fool” because he does not know where a wasp’s sting really lies (2.1.208). When he replies that everyone knows that a wasp’s sting is in the tail, she counters that in reality a wasp’s sting is in “his tongue” (2.1.211). Petruchio tries to reestablish sexual dominance when Katharina bids him farewell. She cannot leave because his tongue is in her tail (2.1.214).

As their conversation grows more combative, Katharina shifts to violence to reestablish her dominance. When Petruchio announces that he is “a gentleman,” she replies “That I’ll try” and hits him (2.1.215). He declares “I swear I’ll cuff you if you strike me again” (2.1.216). Drawing on “the emerging association of overt domestic violence with commonness and of ‘policy’ with gentleness and gentility” (Dolan 16), Katharina replies that if he does, he is “no gentleman” (2.1.218).⁵ Since Petruchio’s plan to tame Katharina by marginalizing her and transforming her into a sex object has failed, he reveals that their marriage has been arranged with her father and that the dowry has been negotiated and agreed to. She will marry him “will you, nill you” (2.1.264). Once Katharina learns that her dowry has been agreed to, the change in her is noticeable.

When Baptista returns, Katharina tries to bully him into rescinding her marriage to “A mad-cap ruffian and a swearing Jack” (2.1.281). Since the dowry has not been paid and the marriage has not been consummated, getting Baptista to withdraw his consent and rescind her dowry is a way to escape the planned nuptials. Baptista ignores her and performs a handfasting ceremony. He joins the couple’s hands and declares “’Tis a match” (2.1.312); Gremio and Tranio announce “We will be witnesses” (313). Shakespeare’s contemporary audience understands that Katharina is now legally married to Petruchio. She can either accept him as her husband or refuse him and suffer social derogation. Her silence is her consent to the marriage. As a *feme covert*, Katharina is aware that her new status impacts her subjectivity and will require new methods of resistance.

Katharina’s evolving view of her subjectivity and the evolution of her resistance to patriarchal authority are framed by dowry. The audience can track the trajectory of these

changes from the announcement that her dowry has been “‘greed on” and the handfasting in Act 2 through the end of the play when Baptista pays Petruchio “Another dowry to another daughter” (5.2.117). As a *feme covert*, the principal influence on her subjectivity is her husband. It is against this backdrop that the audience witnesses Petruchio’s efforts to tame his wife and Katharina’s resistance to his changing tactics as she seeks to maintain her emotional equilibrium and safeguard her subjectivity. Petruchio continues his campaign to tame the shrew by arriving late for the wedding. When he finally appears dressed in an assortment of mismatched garments on a diseased horse, Katharina does not rebuke Petruchio and endures his behavior in the chapel. During the ceremony, Petruchio acts “a very fiend” and a “mad-brained bridegroom” whose irrational and frightening behavior is part of his new method of taming his wife (3.2.145, 153). Because one aspect of her subjectivity is founded on marrying before her younger sister, she completes the ceremony ignoring her husband’s bizarre behavior. Accepting Petruchio’s inappropriate behavior during their wedding ceremony is her tacit acknowledgment she accepts her new status as a *feme covert*.

Petruchio’s refusal to stay for the wedding feast triggers Katharina’s first attempt to openly and publicly resist her husband. Katharina tells Petruchio:

Do what thou canst, I will not go today,
No, nor to-morrow—not till I please myself.
The door is open, sir, there lies your way.
You may be jogging whiles your boots are green.
For me, I'll not be gone till I please myself.

'Tis like you'll prove a jolly, surly groom

That take it on you at the first so roundly. (3.2.197-203)

Petruchio announces that, under coverture, Katharina is “my goods, my chattels, she is my house, / My household stuff, my field, my barn, / My horse, my ox, my ass, my anything” (3.2.219-221). By depriving Katharina’s “opportunity to enjoy the bride’s sense of triumph, of being the center of admiration and interest,” he attempts to “show her that nothing can happen unless and until her husband pleases” (Kahn 94). He draws his sword and symbolically abducts his bride from her own wedding feast.

After arriving at his home, Petruchio changes his method of taming: he physically and mentally tortures his wife. He reveals that Katharina has neither eaten nor slept for two days. Katharina resistance evolves as well; she tries to placate Petruchio during their first supper. When a servant spills water, Petruchio strikes him. When he declares all the meat “burnt,” he rails and Katharina attempts to calm him: “I pray you, husband, be not so disquiet” (4.1.137-8). When placating Petruchio is unsuccessful, she seeks to circumvent his torture by ordering Grumio to bring her food. By employing a masculine gesture of physically correcting an unruly servant, she reverts to a form of resistance that she used successfully in the past; however, this time she fails.

Petruchio changes tactics again. He entices her with the promise of a visit to Padua and her father. He announces that:

Will we return unto thy father's house

And revel it as bravely as the best,

With silken coats and caps, and golden rings,

With ruffs, and cuffs, and farthingales and things,

With scarves, and fans, and double change of bravery.

With amber bracelets, beads, and all this knavery (4.3.53-58)

Petruchio hopes to confuse Katharina and succeed in taming her. It is against this change in tactics that Katharina must devise a coherent and effective plan to insure her subjectivity.

Petruchio hires a haberdasher and tailor to prepare Katharina's wardrobe for the feast. When Petruchio finds fault with the cap and demands that a bigger one be made, Katharina resists by admonishing him: "I'll have no bigger. This doth fit the time, / And gentlewomen wear such caps as these" (4.3.69-70). Petruchio counters that once she is "gentle, you shall have one too" (4.3.71). Since "subjectivity is mediated and realized by material objects," denying the cap denies her "entry into the social class of 'gentlewomen' contingent upon her learning to control her temper" (Brooks 23). He seeks to subvert an evolving goal of her quest to maintain subjectivity after marriage: to resist the objectifying power of the patriarchy and transform an arranged marriage into an affective relationship between equals.

Katharina, in an overt act of defiance, tells Petruchio that she will speak. She is "no child, no babe" and since his "betters have endured me to say my mind," he should prepare to endure her speaking or "stop" his ears (4.3.74-75, 76). By self-consciously violating the patriarchal inculcation for women to be silent, Katharina demands rhetorical and subjective equality in her marriage; her "tongue will tell the anger of my heart / Or else my heart concealing it will break" (4.3.77-78). Telling is freedom, an articulation of her subjectivity, and a justification of her resistance to patriarchal authority. She concludes by vowing "I will be free / Even to the uttermost, as I please in words" (4.3.79-80). Reverting to the taming plan that he

formulated for courting Katharina, Petruchio deflects her outburst by misinterpreting her defiance. He tells her that “I love thee well that thou like’st it not” (4.3.83). She refuses to engage Petruchio in his intentional misrepresentation of her reply: “Love me or love me not, I like the cap, / And it I will have, or I will have none” (4.3.84-5). Petruchio declares that the dress he sees is not the dress he ordered and refuses to pay the bill. Katharina once again responds with silence as he again transforms into “mad” Petruchio. However, believing that Katharina is close to being tamed, Petruchio asks Hortensio to pay the tailor revealing his intent to return to Baptista’s house.

Petruchio, continuing his taming, announces they will go clothed as they are and that since it is “some seven o’clock” they should arrive “by dinnertime” (4.3.179-180). This challenge to Katharina’s “epistemology of time and perception” causes her to dispute his statement (Pearson 107). She counters that “‘tis almost two / And ‘twill be supertime ere you come there” (4.3.181-2). Petruchio, reinforcing the goal of his taming, declares that:

It shall be seven ere I go to horse.

Look what I speak, or do, or think to do,

You are still crossing it. –Sirs, let ‘t alone.

I will not go today; and ere I do,

It shall be what o'clock I say it is. (4.3.183-7)

The brief scene at the beginning of act 4, scene 5, is central to understanding the evolution of Katharina’s resistance to Petruchio’s demand for obedience and reveals her struggles against the annihilation of her subjectivity demanded by her husband. While it appears that we are witnessing the beginning of her capitulation to Petruchio’s taming, it is at this

moment that Katharina chooses to abandon her shrew persona and inhabit the role of obedient wife. When Petruchio declares the moon is shining brightly, Katharina proclaims, “The moon? The sun! It is not moonlight now.” Petruchio replies that “it is the moon that shines so bright.” Katharina, in her last act of open defiance states, “I know it is the sun that shines so bright” (4.5.3-5). Petruchio reminds Katharina of the behavior he expects from her:

It shall be moon, or star, or what I list

Or ere I journey to your father's house. –

Go on and fetch our horses back again –

Evermore crossed and crossed, nothing but crossed! (4.5.7-10)

Hortensio tells Katharina to “Say as he says, or we shall never go” (4.5.11). It is at this moment that Katharina abandons her overt active resistance to patriarchal authority and adopts a covert passive “iterative strategy” to resist Petruchio’s taming (N. Smith 204). Katharina announces:

Forward, I pray, since we have come so far,

And be it moon, or sun, or what you please;

And if you please to call it a rush-candle,

Henceforth I vow it shall be so for me. (4.5.11-15)

To insure that Katharina has been tamed, Petruchio begins a series of obedience tests. When he repeats that he sees the moon, Katharina dutifully replies “I know it is the moon.” Katharina displays obedience by declaring “But sun it is not when you say it is not, /And the moon changes even as your mind,” declaring that whatever “you will have it named, even that it is, / And so it shall be for Katharine” (4.5.18-22); however, her “apparent capitulation” is subverted as “she claims the right to name herself ‘Katharine’” (Enterline 115).

The next obedience test follows when the party encounters Vincentio; Petruchio hails him as “gentle mistress” (4.5.27) and asks Katharina if she has ever “beheld a fresher gentlewoman” (4.5.29). Katharina calls Vincentio a “budding virgin, fair, and fresh, and sweet” (4.5.36). Petruchio abruptly informs Katharina that before them is “a man, old, wrinkled, faded, withered, / And not a maiden as thou sayest he is” (4.5.42-3). She replies that her eyes have been “bedazzled by the sun” and asks Vincentio’s pardon (4.5.45). The “sheer absurdity of his presumption to preside over celestial motions” and to conjure a man into a woman allows Katharina to adopt passive resistance (Langis 51). She allows herself “to bow down without losing dignity and, more importantly, the understanding that play-acting can be used for constructive social ends” (Langis 51). Katharina’s ability to adapt her resistance “implicitly indicates that she understands what is happening to her self in the process” of Petruchio’s taming (Baumlin 248). At the beginning of Act 5 as they are ready to enter her father’s house, Petruchio demands the seemingly obedient Katharina to kiss him “in the midst of the street” (5.1.116). She balks at this immodest public display of affection and Petruchio announces that they will return home immediately. Katharina kisses him and they proceed to the feast.

In an environment of physical and psychological torture, emotional instability, and obedience tests, Katharina makes the speech at the end of the play which has long troubled audiences and scholars. However, her speech marks the point where her understanding of the subjectivity available to her has evolved to meet the new cultural demands of the social reality she now inhabits. Shakespeare places Katharina’s final speech during Bianca’s wedding banquet. Katharina appropriates the attention due the new bride and takes center stage for her performance. As Lisa Hopkins states in *The Shakespearean Marriage: Merry Wives and Heavy*

Husbands, “though the final scene may be predicated on the submission of man to woman, this is itself achieved by a clear establishment of a hierarchy *within* women in which Kate is clearly at the top of the pecking order” (42).

Contextually, Katharina’s final speech is another obedience test. Baptista taunts Petruchio by proclaiming that “in good sadness, son Petruchio, / I think thou hast the veriest shrew of all” (5.2.63-4). Petruchio proposes a wager of each wife’s obedience:

Let's each one send unto his wife,
And he whose wife is most obedient,
To come at first when he doth send for her,
Shall win the wager which we will propose. (5.2.66-9)

When Bianca and the Widow refuse to return to the hall, Petruchio theatrically orders Katharina to “fetch them hither;” if they refuse, Katharina must “Swinge me them soundly forth unto their husbands. / Away, I say, and bring them hither straight” (5.2.107-9). After Katharina exists, Baptista acknowledges that Petruchio has won the wager with Lucentio and Hortensio. He increases Katharina’s dowry with an additional “twenty thousand crowns” as “Another dowry to another daughter, / For she is changed, as she had never been” (5.2.117-9). Petruchio, informs everyone that “I will win my wager better yet, / And show more sign of her obedience, / Her new-built virtue and obedience” (5.2.120-2). Katharina reappears with the disobedient brides and Petruchio commands her to fling her cap “underfoot” (5.2.126); she obeys. It is at this point that Petruchio orders the “tamed” Katharina to tell “these headstrong women / What duty they do owe their lords and husbands” (134-5). Because Bianca’s disobedience means that she no longer inhabits the role of good daughter and good wife, Katharina’s speech allows her to appropriate

the roles Bianca has relinquished. As a surrogate of the patriarchy, Katharina occupies a space of masculine authority temporarily ceded to her by Petruchio in being permitted to use violence against women and claiming Hortensio's and Lucentio's duty to correct their wives' disobedient behavior.

Katharina's speech is a theatrical performance and an ironic recitation of the idealized notions of the husband and wife relationship articulated in the conduct book tradition of early modern England. She develops a subtle and more effective strategy for resisting the power of patriarchal imperatives by appearing to adopt a view of subjectivity that matches the cultural expectations of conduct for married women: the submissive obedient wife. Since she experienced direct assaults to her subjectivity by an oppressive patriarchal ideology, Katharina is aware of power of the patriarchy to marginalize and persecute those that it labels "shrew." She understands that more effective methods of resistance are necessary to safeguard her subjectivity. Resembling a "(mock) lecture, put forth precisely for the other subjects of taming, the Widow and Bianca," (Herzog 202), Katharina encodes her claim to subjectivity into her speech. Since she is publicly correcting "froward" women, she employs male rhetorical gestures to shame her sister and the Widow. Her opening exclamation, "Fie, fie!" expresses male disapproval of their disobedient behavior. Katharina mythologizes their behavior by recalling the death gaze of the basilisk commanding them "dart not scornful glances from those eyes / To wound thy lord, they king, they governor" (5.2.141-2). She then shifts to Petrarchan poetic metaphors that connect outer appearance to inner beauty to objectify women and reinforce male disapproval of disobedient wives. Katharina reminds them that by showing "a threatening unkind brow" (5.2.140), they blot their beauty "as frosts do bite the meads, / Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds

shake fair buds, / And in no sense is meet or amiable” (5.2.143-5). She reinforces the outer and inner beauty connection by proclaiming:

A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty;
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it. (5.2.146-9)

Next, Katharina replays the Elizabethan world view of public authority and duty to the monarch to emphasize the model relationship between husband and wife. She proclaims that since their husbands are “thy lord, thy life, they keeper, / Thy head, thy sovereign,” (5.2.150-1), “Such duty as the subject owes the prince, / Even such a woman oweth to her husband” (5.2.159-160). From this point to the end of her speech, Katharina subverts the patriarchal prescriptions for correcting disobedient wives that she has just articulated. While she appears to be chastising her sister and the widow with her complaint that “I am ashamed that women are so simple” (5.2.165), she is in fact making a claim to subjectivity. Because she speaks and is the “I” of the speech, Katharina declares that her sense of self remains unchanged. She rhetorically shifts to resume her role as a woman by rhetorically asking:

Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our hearts
Should well agree with our external parts? (5.2.169-172)

Petruchio, Baptista, the guests and Shakespeare's audience interpret her speech as a familiar representation of the ideal conduct of a wife; however, she has left the path to subjectivity open. Women need only be obedient to men's "honest will" (5.2.162).⁸

At the end of her speech Katharina reveals that she has chosen to abandon her shrewish behavior and perform the role of the passive good woman because she has learned the futility of overt resistance. In the world of the play, there is no cultural space for the female self to exist; there is no option for subjectivity; there is only submission and obedience. Before marriage, she is under the control of her father; after marriage, coverture demands the legal derogation of the woman and a concomitant subservience to male authority. While seeking to resist patriarchal assaults on her subjectivity with direct confrontation, Katharina recognizes the futility of bandying "word for word and frown for frown" (5.2.176) in a culture that demands obedience of women. Her active resistance to assaults on her leads to public censure, as well as physical and emotional torture by her husband. She has learned that a woman's "lances are but straws, / Our strength as weak, or weakness past compare, / That seeming to be most which we indeed are least" (5.2.177-9). All overt resistance "is not boot" (5.2.180).

Katharina ends her speech with a highly theatrical gesture reminiscent of a knight swearing fealty to his liege lord. She orders her sister and the Widow to join her in placing their "hands below your husband's foot" (5.2.182), revealing "that female submission must be a performance, because her autonomy derives from redirecting agency through the guise of passivity" (Crocker 144).⁶ Katharina's passivity appears to display a view of her subjectivity that matches the cultural expectations of conduct for married women: the submissive obedient wife. She is acutely aware of the power of the patriarchy to marginalize and persecute those that it

labels shrew and now understands that more effective methods of resistance are necessary to safeguard her subjectivity. She uses passive resistance to protect her subjectivity “embracing a logical contradiction that, through its ridiculous mandate, permits her more freedom than did her former displays of autonomy” (Crocker 154).

While it appears that her speech is an appeal for patriarchal approval by a tamed shrew, Katharina benefits from her performance. It allows her to judge public response to her new roles as good wife and good daughter. At the end of her speech, Lucentio and Vincentio congratulate Petruchio for his success. Petruchio, declaring himself a “winner,” accepts Katharina’s speech as her public capitulation and evidence of her successful taming (5.2.191). Katharina’s ostensible taming “represents possibly the most cherished male fantasy” of a “woman un-tamed, even in her subjection” (Kahn 99): publicly displaying the obedience and submission of the good wife and privately retaining the lasciviousness attributed to a shrew. In the penultimate line of the play, Hortensio announces to Shakespeare’s audiences that Petruchio “hast tamed a curst shrew” (5.2.192).

However, while the “veriest shrew of all” appears to be tamed, the old Katharina still exists. She proves her obedience before the feast; however, when Hortensio’s widow proclaims that since Petruchio is “troubled with a shrew, / Measures my husband's sorrow by his woe; / And now you know my meaning” (5.2.28-29). Kate accepts the challenge and remarks that the Widow’s meaning is a “very mean meaning” (5.2.31) and that she, Katharina, is “mean indeed, respecting you” (5.2.32). Petruchio and Hortensio urge their respective wives to verbal combat with Petruchio wagering 100 marks that “my Kate puts her down” (5.2.35). She is prepared to use language to resist the Widow’s assault on her subjectivity that the label “shrew” implies

Bianca

Shakespeare's audience would recognize that Lucentio and Bianca are negotiating a companionate marriage. While the key to an arranged marriage was the dowry agreement, the keys to a companionate marriage are the compatibility and affective relations of the couple. Companionate marriage offers a streamlined and more efficient marriage model than the arranged marriage. Bianca and Lucentio conflate the dowry negotiations, parental approval, and courtship into a series of affective encounters.

Two requirements for the companionate marriage are the willingness to violate cultural practices regarding the selection of a socially and economically satisfactory bride or groom and the acceptance of the consequences for ignoring the patriarchal expectation of a negotiated dowry. Bianca knows that choosing her own husband will result in her father's disapproval and censure. Lucentio is so besotted with Bianca that he constructs an elaborate scheme to woo her without Baptista's knowledge or approval.

Unlike Katharina's vigorous defense of her subjectivity in act 1, Bianca does not appear to possess subjectivity. As the play opens, she seems to be the archetypal good daughter: Lucentio observes that in Bianca's "silence do I see / Maid's mild behavior and sobriety" (1.1.70-1). Her beauty and "mild behavior" enrapture Lucentio and he experiences love at first sight. He tells Tranio that "I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio / If I achieve not this young modest girl" (1.1.147-8). Bianca is objectified into a stereotypical expression of the male love fantasy and physical desire. Baptista emphasizes her objectification by describing his youngest daughter as "good Bianca" (1.1.76). Bianca reinforces the male fantasy of her as the good girl when she informs her father:

Sir, to your pleasure humbly I subscribe.

My books and instruments shall be my company,

On them to look and practice by myself. (1.1.81-2)

She appears to assume a passive role in the sibling rivalry with Katharina. When Katharina ties Bianca's hands and upbraids her at the beginning of act 2, Bianca reinforces the audience's perception of her as obedient and submissive. She implores Katharina:

Good sister, wrong me not, nor wrong yourself,

To make a bondmaid and a slave of me.

That I disdain; but for these other goods,

Unbind my hands, I'll pull them off myself,

Yea, all my raiment, to my petticoat,

Or what you will command me will I do,

So well I know my duty to my elders. (2.1.1-7)

When Katharina demands to know which suitor she prefers, Bianca's reply reveals that she does not share her elder sister's anxiety about marriage. She states:

Believe me, sister, of all the men alive

I never yet beheld that special face

Which I could fancy more than any other. (2.1.10-2)

The implication is that her father will choose a husband for her and she does not need to express a preference about whom she loves; however, no one, not her father or her suitors, can decide whom she will marry.

The key to understanding her sense of agency is manifest in her courtship and her “deliberate and motivated identity fraud” (Walsh 1065). Bianca performance of the conventional “Good Girl role” promises “to destine her for all the happiness that her unconventional sister lacks” (Hamilton 93). At the beginning of act 3, Cambio and Litio compete for Bianca’s attention. She stops their bickering by declaring that she is “no breeching scholar” who must be “pointed times,” but she will “please myself” in her choice of husband (3.1.17-20). When Cambio reveals his complex scheme to woo her, Bianca refuses his initial overture. She tells Cambio that, since she does not know him, she cannot trust him, but that he should “despair not” (3.1.38-40). Bianca, however, does encourage him. She says that “In time I may believe, yet I mistrust.” She will choose when and if she will accept him as a suitor. Cambio reassures her that as surely as Ajax was named for his grandfather she may trust his love (3.1.46-48). Bianca ambiguously replies “I must believe my master; else, I promise you, / I should be arguing still upon that doubt” (3.1.49-50). Bianca steadfastly controls the suitors’ desire to court her. She hastily dismisses Cambio and turns to her other admirer. Hortensio reveals his love in a letter titled “gamut of Hortensio” (3.1.67). She rebuffs his declaration of love:

Call you this gamut? Tut, I like it not.

Old fashions please me best; I am not so nice

To change true rules for odd inventions. (74-6)

Bianca insists “on setting the conditions of her tutorials” and “not only inverts the tutor-pupil relationship, but she also reveals herself to be as willful as her sister” (Brooks 16-17). Although she gives the audience the impression that her “mild behavior and sobriety” show her to be a “young modest girl,” her actions belie her true intentions; Bianca is determined to choose her

own husband. Bianca's parting words show her both playing the "sweet Bianca" role and leading the courtship dance with both partners at once: "Take it not unkindly, pray, / That I have been thus pleasant with you both" (Hamilton 98).

Later in act 4, scene 4, we learn that their secret marriage has been planned. Biondello tells Lucentio that the "old priest of Saint Luke's church is at your command at all hours" (4.4.85-6) and that he needs to "take assurance of her" (4.4.89) so that their wedding may proceed. Lucentio reveals that the decision to marry ultimately rests with Bianca. He tells Tranio that "I may, and will, if she be so contented" (4.4.100). He is so infatuated with Bianca that he does not realize that she has assumed the dominant male position in their courtship and secret marriage.

Bianca averts direct attacks on her subjectivity by playing the dutiful virtuous daughter. Her feigned passivity and seeming goodness are acts of resistance that reinforce the male fantasy of her as the good girl. She uses the male perception of her as the chaste silent obedient daughter to escape the assaults on her subjectivity that the more vocal Katharina endures. Her authentic sense of self and resistance to male attempts to objectify her are revealed as the play progresses. She uses her position as the good daughter to have her father protect her from Katharina's verbal and physical assaults. Baptista intercedes on her behalf in act 1 when he reassures her that Katharina's behavior will not cause her father to "love thee ne'er the less, my girl" (1.1.77). In act 2, when Katharina binds her sister's hands and berates her, Baptista intervenes demanding that his eldest daughter explain "whence grows this insolence" (2.1.23). When Katharina attempts to physically assault Bianca, Baptista protects Bianca by ordering her to leave the room.

Her resistance is further evident in her rejection of all socially mandated provisions for finding a suitable husband. She will not marry someone that her father has chosen. She permits Lucentio and Hortensio to court her without consideration of her father's efforts to find a husband for his youngest daughter that he approves of. Most importantly, she resists the culturally imposed demand that men negotiate a suitable dowry before courtship can begin or a marriage can take place. She will control the courtship phase and negotiate her own hymen-dowry.

While her resistance is subtle at the beginning of the play, her surreptitious courtship and secret marriage reveal a young woman with a strong sense of self who appropriates her father's role as matchmaker. It is in this masculine position that she chooses her husband. In conjunction with her male role as matchmaker, she rejects the male need for a wealth-based dowry. Since she has her own dowry to negotiate, competing dowry negotiations are created: Baptista an auction to negotiate a favorable jointure and Bianca negotiates for her hymen-dowry. In the patriarchal marriage model that Baptista subscribes to, a dowry based on money and property objectifies and commodifies women. Whoever can provide the greatest jointure will wed Bianca and win her dowry. Since he believes that female subjectivity does not exist, Baptista expects Bianca to accept the winner of the dower auction he devises. The presumption of obedience underscores his belief that women are commodities that can be sold to the highest bidder. It is this systemic assumption of obedience by men that Bianca resists. By choosing her own husband and contracting her virginity to him, Bianca occupies a space reserved for men: instead of surrendering her hymen-dowry to the man of her father's choosing, she selects the man that receives her virginity.

Baptista expects specific responses from Bianca based on her previously performed role as the good daughter. He believes that Bianca will accept whoever wins the dower auction without question. Bianca rejects Baptista's economic notion of dowry because it ignores any subjectivity that she intrinsically possesses and represents her extrinsic value baldly in economic terms. Her resistance to these assumptions is based on a belief in her subjectivity. Bianca believes that she is neither merchandise nor chattel to be sold to the highest bidder. By controlling her virginity, she manifests her subjectivity.

She assumes the male prerogative of deciding when her legal status changes from *feme sole* to *feme covert* by consenting to marry Lucentio. She does so regardless of the consequences of potentially marrying a man who may be below her social and economic status. During the revelation scene, Baptista's exclamation, "is not this my Cambio" (5.1.96), reveals that he believes his daughter has married a poor pedant and their family faces social derogation.

Bianca's bawdy and confrontational language at her wedding feast reveals her authentic sense of subjectivity. Since she has "achieved the desirable husband and the married status that she sought, Bianca drops her mask of the mild and innocent maid" (Hamilton 108). She takes an active part in the banter of sexual *double entendres*. When Gremio says "they butt together well," (5.2.40) referring to both the butting of heads and the "tail, bottom" (Dolan 133); Bianca interjects with "Head, and butt! An hasty-witted body / Would say your head and butt were head and horn" (5.2.40-1) foregrounding the ever-present male anxiety of being cuckolded. When her new father-in-law asks if the wordplay has "awakened" (5.2.42) her, she replies "Aye, but not frightened me. Therefore I'll sleep again" (5.2.42-3). Seeking to objectify her as the focus of male derision, Petruchio attempts to tell her that she "shall not" sleep again because "Since you

have begun, / Have at you for a bitter jest or two!" (5.2.44-5). Bianca denies Petruchio's presumption of male authority; she is not his "bird" (5.2.46). She announces that "I mean to shift my bush" (5.2.46) implying that she will be hard to hit as she moves to another bush and "with a possible bawdy double meaning; *bush* can suggest pubic hair" (Dolan 133).⁸ At the end of the play, she uses language to resist the patriarchal expectations of obedience. As part of the wager, Lucentio sends for his wife; she sends back word that "she is busy" and "cannot come" (5.2.85). Bianca returns only under physical compulsion by Katharina. When Bianca sees Katharina cast down her hat at Petruchio's command she asks "what a foolish duty call you this?" (5.2.129). When Lucentio tells her that

I would your duty were as foolish too;

The wisdom of your duty, fair Bianca,

Hath cost me a hundred crowns since supper-time! (5.2.129-131)

Bianca announces that Lucentio is the fool "for laying on my duty" (5.2.133). Because Bianca refuses to submit to his obedience test, Lucentio "is left positioned as the play's symbolically castrated husband whose purse was cut off by a wife's rebellion" reinforcing his wife's appropriation of male authority in their marriage (Boose 194). Since she selects her own husband, marries before a priest, and receives assurance from her father-in-law that he will provide an acceptable dowry to her father (5.1.109), "Bianca drops her mask of the mild and innocent maid" and reveals herself as the real "shrew" at the end of the play (Hamilton 108). Bianca's disingenuous appearance as the meek and obedient child at the beginning of the play lead the audience to realize that she uses "cunning methods" to appropriate the dominant role in

marriage thus posing “more danger to the patriarchy than the outwardly hostile” Katharina (Brown 53).

Successful Quests

By the end of the play, the audience understands that Katharina’s quest is successful. She achieves her goal of being married before her younger sister and converting an arranged to a companionate marriage. As the more conventional daughter of the two, she agrees to the arranged marriage negotiated by her father and Petruchio; the dowry negotiations, courtship, and marriage conform to the traditional model for an early modern English marriage that Shakespeare’s contemporary audience would recognize. Katharina consents to a handfasting ceremony before witnesses and a formal sanctification ceremony in church before a priest despite Petruchio’s outrageous garb and behavior.

The audience can follow the trajectory of her transformation from “shrew” to good wife and daughter during the course of the play. However, her taming is uncertain. In her final speech, Katharina appears to submit to her husband’s authority and acknowledges her taming. Yet her final speech is a performance before an audience in which she establishes a “hierarchy *within* women in which Kate is clearly at the top of the pecking order” (Hopkins 44). It shows that she has been tamed and reinforces the male fantasy of subjugation; however, it contains a clear description of the duties owed by the wife to the husband and the husband to the wife. Although she was not allowed to attend her wedding banquet, she claims Bianca’s wedding celebration to assert her dominance and supplant her sister as Baptista’s favorite. Finally, in the last line of the play, Lucentio expresses the audiences’ uncertainty that Katharina is truly tamed. He remarks that, “’Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so” (5.2.193).

The audience realizes that when Bianca reveals her authentic self in the final act of the play, her quest is successful. The audiences' initial opinion of Bianca is formed at the beginning of the play when her behavior is contrasted with that of the "intolerable curst / And shrewd, and froward" Katharina (1.2.83-4). Hortensio, Grumio, and Lucentio describe her younger sister, the "beautiful Bianca," as a "treasure" and "jewel" (1.2.111, 109, 110). At the end of the play, the audience witnesses Bianca adopt the role that Katharina has discarded as the disobedient wilful daughter. As her father's favorite, Bianca "dupes everyone, especially her father, into thinking that she is an innocent, ingenious, submissive maiden" (Brown 40). Not only does she refuse Lucentio's summons in act 5, she peremptorily dismisses his complaint of the lost wager by exclaiming "The more fool you, for laying on my duty" (5.2.133). Since she has "achieved the desirable husband and the married status that she sought, Bianca drops her mask of the mild and innocent maid" (Hamilton 108) and reveals herself as "the veriest shrew of all" (5.2.64).

Chapter 3: “Prodigious birth of love”

--*Romeo and Juliet* (1.5.137)

While marriage is the primary rite of passage for the young men and women in *Taming of the Shrew*, the Capulet/Montague feud dominates *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare combines the power of the feud, the arranged marriage in service to the feud, religion, Petrarchan and Ovidian discourse to objectify women as sex objects or quasi-religious relics, and primogeniture as patriarchal structures that dominate women in the world of the play. These structures create a synchronicity of objectifications by combining their absolute power to subjugate women and deny them access to any relative power that they may experience in their marriages.¹ The net effect of this combination of structures is Juliet’s and Romeo’s suicides and the death of the Capulet and Montague family names.

Although Shakespeare does not use the term dowry in the play, Juliet’s quest is framed by dowry: the predowry negotiations between Capulet and the County Paris and the dowry of peace offered by her father to Montague at the conclusion of the dramatic action. Capulet and Paris do not explicitly discuss Juliet’s dowry; however, it is a factor in negotiating a marriage. Capulet’s wealth is well known. As the Nurse tells Romeo, “he that can lay hold of her / shall have the chinks” (2.113-14). Paris is invited to the “old accustomed feast” to meet Juliet and to see the Capulet family wealth on display, social connections, and the family patriarch’s largesse. While Paris’s main goal is to produce an heir, Juliet’s wealth and high social status are enticing incentives to marry her.

Before meeting Romeo, Juliet’s subjectivity appears to conform to the social conventions of the world of the play: she is the dutiful and obedient young daughter of a wealthy Veronese

merchant and his wife; she exhibits the desirable qualities of being chaste, silent, and obedient. She gives the appearance of obedience when her mother asks if she can love the County Paris. She implies that she will follow her mother's counsel in choosing a husband and that she will "look to like if looking liking more, / But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent give strength to make it fly" (1.4.98-100). Juliet accepts the restrictions placed on her movements. Juliet uses the Nurse as a messenger to Romeo in Act 2, scene 5, and later she asks "leave to go to shrift" (2.6.65).

Juliet's physical and social isolation throughout the play influence her subjectivity and limit her opportunities for resistance. She is a valuable commodity for her family, especially Lord Capulet; she is the only daughter of a wealthy family, beautiful, and approaching the age of child-bearing. Therefore, to protect her value (i.e., her virginity), Juliet is confined to the house and grounds of the Capulet estate. We see her away from home only three times during the play: in Act 2, scene 6, when she meets Romeo at Friar Laurence's cell and again in Act 4, scene 1, at Friar Laurence's cell. Her final appearance outside her home is in Act 5, scene 3, in the Capulet family crypt. There is only once during the play that we see Juliet in a social setting: at her father's party where she meets Romeo. As a Montague, Romeo "may not have access" to Juliet; however, "And she as much in love, her means much less / To meet her new belovèd anywhere" (2. Chorus.9, 11-12).

She is isolated within the home as well. There is an emotional distance between Juliet and her parents. The Nurse is a mother surrogate for Juliet, announcing that Juliet "wast the prettiest babe that e'er I nursed" (1.3.61). Lady Capulet uses the Nurse as messenger; Lord Capulet sends his wife to ask "How stands your disposition to be married?" (1.3.66). Juliet has

two on-stage conversations with her mother and one with her father. After Juliet seeks to delay her marriage and Capulet rages at his daughter, Lady Capulet attempts to appease or at least calm her husband, but ultimately she tells her daughter, “Talk not to me, for I’ll not speak a word. / Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee” (3.5.204-05). The Nurse appears to be Juliet’s only ally; however, fearing expulsion from the Capulet home, she advises Juliet that since Romeo is exiled and “since the case so stands as now it doth, / I think it best you married with the County” (3.5.218-19). This is the final abandonment by the Nurse and her parents and leads her to agree to the friar’s desperate plan.

Juliet’s isolation contrasts starkly with Romeo’s freedom throughout the play. He roams the streets of Verona and environs at will and possesses social support from his family and friends. He has a good reputation in the city; even Juliet’s father says during the party that Romeo “bears him like a portly gentleman, / And, to say truth, Verona brags of him / To be a virtuous and well-governed youth” (1.5.63-65).

Scholarly discussions of the feud frequently particularize their analysis on the impact that the feud has on the characters of Juliet and Romeo either individually or as a couple. However, in Shakespeare’s Verona the feud operates as a systemic manifestation of the patriarchy’s need to exercise power and to “be tragically self-destructive” (Kahn 6). As portrayed in the play, the feud is a crisis of “secular authority” (Herman 96). Prince Escalus is unable to maintain the peace; he is forced to intervene in the brawl at the beginning of Act 1 and announces that in the fighting between the Capulets and Montagues “Have thrice disturbed our streets” (1.1.78). The feud requires “Verona’s ancient citizens . . . / To wield old partisans in hands as old” to maintain peace and order (1.1.79, 81).

The representatives of the patriarchy are ineffective at stopping the violence demanded by the feud. Prince Escalus's declaration that "If ever you disturb our streets again, / Your lives shall pay the forfeit of the peace" (1.1.83-84) is ignored; at the beginning of Act 3, despite the threat of execution, another street brawl results in the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt. Instead of executing Montague and Capulet as he decreed, the Prince merely banishes Romeo, exacerbating the need for revenge by the Capulets and adding impetus to the power of the feud. Montague and Capulet, as the comic scene in Act 1, scene 1, reveals, are too old to actively fight in the feud and cannot prevent the brawling that occurs in the streets of Verona or control the violence of the feud perpetuated on their behalf. Escalus reveals his responsibility for the deaths, at the end of the play, that "for winking at your discords too, / Have lost a brace of kinsmen" (5.3.294-95).

The feud demands blood sacrifice. As the play progresses, it becomes evident that for the young men of Verona the feud provides "the impetus for an inward rivalry, an inward pressure to masculine self-assertion that cannot be appeased or concluded" (Appelbaum 252). The Capulet and Montague men are forced to assert their masculinity by fighting and dying in service to the feud. The women, who are expected to support the men as non-combatants, serve the feud as victims. At the end of the play the feud kills six characters: since Romeo's "exile has stopped her breath" (5.3.211), Lady Montague dies of grief before learning of her son's suicide; Tybalt dies in combat and Juliet kills herself for love; Prince Escalus's kinsmen Mercutio and Paris die in combat as well.

The feud demands absolute loyalty to "their paternal household against another paternal household" so that the lines of conflict between the families are clear and inviolable (Kahn 6). This polarizes Juliet's and Romeo's "social relations, particularly their marital choices, in terms

of filial allegiance” (Kahn 6). Lord Capulet’s marriage negotiations with the County Paris require him to act as Juliet’s father and as his family’s commander in the feud. For the men fighting the feud, women are objects of “fear and scorn” associated with “effeminacy and emasculation” (Kahn 6). Romeo’s reluctance to fight for his family results in his friend Mercutio’s “mortal hurt / In my behalf” (3.1.97-98). Despite his reluctance to actively engage in the feud, he kills Tybalt in revenge of Mercutio and Paris in the Capulet tomb.

The Capulet/Montague Feud

Before meeting Romeo, the feud forbids Juliet access to her subjectivity. The audience recognizes that, as Capulet’s only surviving child, Juliet is expected to support the feud by marrying the kinsman of the Prince of Verona without hesitation or complaint. Her subjectivity is regulated by the “familial roles” that she is required to occupy (Froide 17). Within *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare creates a narrative environment that demands the young men of Verona participate in the feud to the exclusion of all other social responsibilities. The feud precipitates the events of the play:

Structurally, the play’s design reflects the prominence of the feud. It erupts in three scenes at the beginning, middle, and end (I.1, III.1, V.3) which deliberately echo each other, and the peripeteia, at which Romeo’s and Juliet’s fortunes change decisively for the worse, occurs exactly in the middle when Romeo kills Tybalt, an action which poses the two conflicting definitions of manhood between which Romeo must make his tragic choice (Kahn 6).

The feud functions as the instrument by which the sons and daughters of Verona socialize themselves into the adult roles that they are expected to assume. Since the feud “reinforces their

identities as sons and daughters” of a “paternal household” directly in conflict with “another paternal household,” their choices of marriage partners are polarized strictly in terms of “filial allegiance” to their family (Kahn 6).

Family loyalty demands women support their households in service to the feud. Even as a non-combatant, Lady Capulet is an active instrument of the feud. Instead of being her daughter’s ally and confidante, she is an intermediary and messenger between her daughter and her husband. Lady Capulet encourages Juliet to accept the arranged marriage negotiated by her father and the County Paris. Declaring that marriage at her daughter’s age is not uncommon, Lady Capulet announces that “Younger than you / Her in Verona, ladies of esteem / Are made already mother. By my count / I was your mother much upon these years / That you are now a maid” (1.3.70-74). Marrying a kinsman to the Prince of Verona provides their family with political and tactical advantages in the feud, offers the Capulet family the opportunity for social advancement, and benefits Juliet financially since she will share “all that he doth possess” (1.3.94).

Lady Capulet invokes *lex talionis*, “the law of retaliation, ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’” in her thirst for revenge on Romeo for Tybalt’s death (*OED*). After discovering that “her brother’s child” has been killed by Montague’s son, she demands “justice, which thou, Prince must give. / Romeo slew Tybalt; Romeo must not live” (3.1.133, 167-68). She tells Juliet that “Some grief shows much love; / But much of grief shows still some want of wit” (3.5.72-73). The time for grief is over; it is time for “vengeance.” Lady Capulet plans to send an agent to Mantua “Where that same banished runagate doth live, / Shall give him such an unaccustomed dram, / That he shall soon keep Tybalt company” (3.5.88-91).

The power of the feud even compels the servants of both houses as well as the citizens of Verona to participate as combatants or supporters. As the play opens, the audience witnesses the quarrel and violence between Sampson and Gregory of the house of Capulet and Abraham and Benvolio representing the house of Montague. To prevent more innocent victims of the feud, the citizens of Verona are compelled to arm themselves with “Clubs, bills, and partisans” to “Beat . . . down” the Capulets and the Montagues (1.1.60). The Nurse, supporting Capulet in arranging his daughter’s marriage to a relation of Prince Escalus, encourages her to marry Paris and “seek happy nights to happy days” (1.3.105).

Expectation of Obedience

As the “primary tragic force in the play” and “an extreme expression of patriarchal society,” the feud demands absolute obedience (Kahn 5). Since the feud is fought between families and the family is “patriarchal” and “authoritarian,” women are subordinate and submissive to men and their obedience to the *pater familias* is assumed (Slater 26). They are expected to passively aid the prosecution of the feud by supporting the men who are actively fighting. Capulet relies on this expectation to negotiate Juliet’s marriage without consulting her. He tells Paris “I think she will be ruled / In all respects by me. Nay, more, I doubt it not” (3.4.13-14). Since Juliet is expected to approve of her father’s choice of husband, Capulet is disingenuous in his demand that Paris must “woo her” because his “will to her consent is but a part” (1.2.16-17). Juliet’s consent, however, is confined “within her scope of choice”; the final decision for the marriage depends on Capulet’s “consent and fair according voice” (1.2.19, 20).

The corollary to the expectation of obedience is the punishment for disobedience. The *Homily on Obedience* proclaims that “ALMIGHTYE GOD hath created and appoynted all

things, in heaven, earth and waters, in a mooste excellent and perfecte order.” To maintain “the goodly order of god” children must obey fathers and “husbandes wives” (60). Therefore, resistance to patriarchal authority is disobedient and a violation of God’s will.² After Tybalt’s death, Juliet’s marriage to Paris is vital to winning the feud. Capulet’s response to Juliet’s reluctance to marry Paris is immediate and contains the threat of physical violence. He tells Juliet that if she refuses to “go with Paris to Saint Peter’s Church,” he “will drag” her “on a hurdle thither.” When Juliet pleads for her father “with patience but to speak a word,” Capulet’s violent harangue continues:

Hang thee, young baggage, disobedient wretch!

I tell thee what: get thee to church o' Thursday,

Or never after look me in the face.

Speak not, reply not, do not answer me!

My fingers itch. (3.5.160-64)

Capulet’s imperious language displays the characteristic response when the patriarchal expectations of female obedience are impeded. He declares that he will “give you to my friend / And you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets” (3.5.193-94). He has no concern for Juliet, but announces “I’ll not be forsworn” (3.5.197).

The patriarchal expectation of obedience directly opposes Juliet’s quest for subjectivity; however, active resistance is dangerous. When Lady Capulet announces that Juliet will marry the County Paris “early next Thursday morn” (3.5.112), Juliet declares that “Now, by Saint Peter’s Church, and Peter too, / He shall not make me there a joyful bride!” (3.5.116-17). Capulet threatens to disown and physically assault his daughter.

Juliet resists the expectation of obedience by manipulating “language creatively to support her increasing independence” (Kahn 16). Appearing to be chastened by her father’s anger, she informs the Nurse that “Having displeased my father, to Laurence’ cell / To make confession and to be absolved” (3.5.234-35). In Friar Laurence’s cell, she uses “equivocation in her stilted, stichomythic conversation with Paris” (Kahn 16). Paris greets her with “Happily met, my lady and my wife.” Juliet replies “That may be, sir, when I may be a wife” (3.5.134-35). Later, at home, Capulet demands “How now, my headstrong, where have you been gadding?” Juliet replies that she has “learned me to repent the sin / Of disobedient opposition / To you and your behests,” begs her father’s “Pardon” and announces that “Henceforward I am ever ruled by you” (4.2.15-17, 20, 21).

The Arranged Marriage

The feud, as the dominant patriarchal structure in the play, requires that all political and social structures serve its needs. Marriage in the world of Verona is not for love and companionship; it exists as a patriarchal structure that contains political, economic, and social advantages in service to the feud. Capulet’s desire to negotiate an arranged marriage between his daughter and a kinsman to the Prince of Verona opposes Juliet’s hope for a companionate marriage to Romeo. Capulet envisions Juliet’s marriage as a weapon that will bestow political and social advantages that he can wield in the feud. The marriage is crucial to Capulet; it makes him a relative of Prince Escalus and gives Capulet a tactical advantage of two to one in young aristocratic soldiers: Tybalt and Paris versus Romeo. Since the “earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she,” Juliet is the sole surviving heir of the Capulets (1.2.14). At their marriage, Paris would become the de facto son who would inherit Capulet’s wealth, ascend to head of the family

when he dies, and assume responsibility for continuing the feud with the Montagues. This is a form of legal primogeniture that will insure that Capulet's wealth will be inherited by an eldest son and continue the family name.

The arranged marriage envisioned by Capulet objectifies Juliet as a fungible commodity that possesses exchange value. He seeks to barter Juliet's body for advantage in the feud. Capulet will provide Paris with a dowry appropriate to a family of their economic standing in exchange for Paris's anticipated active participation in the feud. Since Juliet is the only surviving child of the Capulet family and there is no male heir, he will control her dowry and any wealth she inherits. Her dowry is also a payment on the social advantages that Juliet's marriage to Paris will buy. Since he is anxious to marry and produce children, Paris objectifies Juliet for her use value as a broodmare. Juliet's social standing and wealth combined with any children the marriage produces will increase Paris's social status as the head of his own household. This marriage signifies his attainment of manhood (Panek 49) and allows Paris *entrée* to a higher social status; further, it transforms him from an unmarried young man like Romeo and Mercutio into the patriarch of his own family like Capulet and Montague.

Another patriarchal structure that participates in the synchronicity of objectification and impedes Juliet's quest is religion personified by Friar Laurence. As Juliet's "ghostly confessor," he is the religious complement of Prince Escalus in the play (2.6.21); however, the friar is a man "attached to political power but also divided from it" (Appelbaum 268). While Prince Escalus represents civil authority, Friar Laurence represents religious authority; both objectify women as subordinates to male power and compel them to obey secular laws as well as spiritual authority. However, Friar Laurence is not a member of "a royal priesthood" that combines secular and

religious authority, but represents “a church unsubordinated to the state and capable of acting quite independently of the state’s jurisdiction” (Beckwith 76). He occupies sometimes contradictory positions as a representative of the Catholic Church, spiritual advisor to Romeo and later Juliet, arbiter of moral conduct, and herbalist skilled in distilling potions. Shakespeare creates a character with a “splintered nature” whose desire to help the young lovers is consistently undermined by the events of the play as they unfold on the stage and by his own incompetence (Kriegel 141). Ignoring the “always present presence of state power in this play,” Friar Laurence attempts a religious solution to end the feud by marrying the couple (Reynolds and Segal 56). He declares that the young lovers’ “alliance may so happy prove, / To turn your households’ rancor to pure love” (2.3.91-92). Friar Laurence encourages the couple to consummate their marriage making it inviolable. He advises Romeo to “Go, get thee to thy love, as was decreed; / Ascend her chamber; hence and comfort her” (3.3.146-47). However, the marriage is problematic. At almost 14 years of age, Juliet has reached the age of consent; however, neither her parents nor Romeo’s have given their approval. An acceptable dowry and jointure is neither negotiated nor agreed to; the banns are not posted; there is no sanctification ceremony before witnesses to consecrate the marriage. Friar Laurence’s solution appropriates Prince Escalus’s civil authority and undermines the marriage negotiations between Juliet’s father and the County Paris. After Romeo’s banishment, Friar Laurence continues to believe that he can end the feud and proposes that Romeo accept his banishment to Mantua:

Where thou shalt live till we can find a time
To blaze your marriage, reconcile your friends,
Beg pardon of the Prince, and call thee back

With twenty hundred thousand times more joy

Than thou went'st forth in lamentation. (3.3.150-54)

The friar imagines that he can act as an intermediary between the feuding families and use the young lover's marriage as a peace offering that combines the two houses into a new family that combines the Capulet and Montague family names, wealth, and influence. This idea miscarries when the messenger that is supposed to tell Romeo of the plan to simulate Juliet's death is quarantined during a plague outbreak.

Further, Friar Laurence's advice is dangerous and leads to the tragic deaths of the young lovers. After their marriage is consummated, Tybalt slain, Romeo banished to Mantua, and her marriage to Paris imminent, Friar Laurence proposes to Juliet a "thing like death to chide away this shame, / That cop'st with Death himself to scape from it" (4.1.74-75). Since Juliet faces the prospect of either revealing her secret marriage or committing the sin of bigamy by marrying Paris, she agrees to drink the "distilling liquor" and endure the horror of being buried alive in her family's mausoleum (4.1.94). Juliet must "Go home; be merry; give consent / To marry Paris" (4.1.89-90). If she takes the potion, the plan goes forward; however, if she balks, his plan fails and Juliet is placed in an untenable position. Even Friar Laurence describes his plan as "a kind of hope, / Which craves as desperate an execution" (4.1.69-70). However, Juliet is suspicious of the friar's motive. Just before taking the potion, she wonders if the friar has in fact given her poison to kill her "Lest in this marriage he should be dishonored / Because he married me before to Romeo? / I fear it is" (4.3.26-8). The friar imagines that he is able to create a potion that will allow him to master life and death and place him "on par with God" (Kriegel 140). Once his plan fails, Romeo kills Tybalt and himself, Juliet lately awakened from her death like sleep, and

the watch approaching the tomb, Friar Laurence's solution is to again entomb Juliet "Among a sisterhood of holy nuns" (5.3.157). Juliet can claim sanctuary in a convent and not be forced to dishonor her husband's memory. As a nun, her cloistering and vow of chastity will protect her from the possibility of another arranged marriage, because, although she is not a virgin, she is legally a widow from a wealthy family. Friar Laurence, fearing discovery at the scene of slaughter, abandons Juliet. Although he bears considerable responsibility for the play's tragic end, as a member of a complementary patriarchal structure, the Prince pardons Friar Laurence, proclaiming "We still have known thee for a holy man" (5.3.270).

Juliet's Quest and Male Discourse

Shakespeare places Juliet's quest for subjectivity within a patriarchal and social framework that objectifies women as either sex objects or idealized objects of love and worship. Shakespeare's men use two discursive traditions to describe, talk about, and talk to women: the "anti-romantic" Ovidian and "romantic" Petrarchan discursive traditions (Gajowski 18). Both Petrarchan and Ovidian discourse represents a patriarchal ideology that "sexually objectifies the female body and equates a woman's worth with her body's appearance and sexual function" (Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr 6).

The Ovidian rhetoric of Sampson's and Gregory's exchange at the beginning of the play embodies the concept of women as objects of male sexual desire and targets of sexual violence. Since women are the "weaker vessel," Sampson will "thrust" the Montague "maids to the wall" and forcibly take "their maiden heads" (1.1.13-15, 20). The violence demanded by the feud is not limited to male combatants from the families; women are victims of violence, as Sampson, a Capulet servant, visualizes a rape fantasy against Montague women. Benvolio uses Ovidian

rhetoric to emphasize this view of women. When Romeo announces that his love for Rosaline is unrequited because she is “in strong proof of chastity well armed” (1.1.198), Benvolio instructs his friend to “Forget to think of her” and “examine other beauties” (1.1.212, 215). He proposes that Romeo, while at Capulet’s party, look “with unattainted eye / Compare her face with some that I shall show, / And I will make thee think thy swan a crow” (1.2.85-87). To Benvolio, and the other members of their coterie, women are interchangeable; he can cure Romeo love sickness by simply replacing Rosaline with another woman, any other woman. When Romeo complains that he is sinking “under love’s heavy burden” and that love is “too rough / Too rude too boisterous, and it pricks like a thorn” (1.4.22, 25-26), Mercutio, reinforcing Ovidian discourse’s inherent violence, counsels that “If love be rough with you, be rough with love; / prick love for pricking, and you beat love down” (1.4.27-28). The County Paris presents another form of Ovidian discourse when he presses his suit to marry Juliet. She is an object of sexual pleasure and possesses the potential of becoming a “happy” mother (1.2.12).

Romeo’s language at the start of the play epitomizes Petrarchan rhetoric that treats women as objects of adoration and worship. As the play opens we see Romeo suffering from the effects of his love for Rosaline. Love is “smoke made with the fume of sighs” and a “sea nourished with lover’s tears” (1.1.177, 179). Love wounds and is a source of torment; for Romeo, it is “a choking gall” (1.1.181). Romeo bemoans his unrequited love, but he most laments her decision to remain chaste. He tells Benvolio that “in that sparing makes huge waste, / For beauty starved with her severity / Cuts beauty off from all posterity” (1.2.205-207).³

Romeo begins to objectify Juliet as a love object even as he experiences love-at-first-sight in Act 1, scene 5. He asks a servant “What lady’s that which doth enrich the hand / Of

yonder knight?" (1.5.39-40). Juliet enriches the hand of a knight as a jewel, placing her within the tradition of courtly love and the concomitant veneration of the woman that that tradition requires. Romeo continues with a Petrarchan paean idealizing her beauty. Not only does Juliet "teach the torches to burn bright," but when her beauty is placed against the "cheek of night," it shines as a "jewel in an Ethiop's ear" (1.5.40-42). He underscores the contrast of her beauty to other women by noting that it "shows a snowy dove trooping with crows" (1.5.44). He resolves to meet her so that he may "make blessed" his "rude hand" by "touching hers" (1.5.46-47). Since he has never seen "true beauty till this night," Romeo exclaims "Did my heart ever love till now? Forswear it, sight!" (1.5.50, 48). As Gajowski notes in "*Romeo and Juliet* and the Petrarchan Discursive Tradition," "Underlying Petrarchan discourse lies a concern with sexual conquest and possession not unlike that made explicit by Ovidian discourse" (30). When he finally speaks to her, he tries to transform Juliet's hand into a religious shrine; one that only he can worship, but never enjoy:

If I profane with my unworthing hand
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. (1.5.90-93)

In the balcony scene Romeo again tries to objectify Juliet. When Juliet enters, he proclaims "Juliet is the sun" whose beauty will "kill the envious moon" because "thou her maid are more fair than she" (2.2.3-4, 6). Romeo's juxtaposition of beauty and violence reveals Petrarchan rhetoric's underlying need to possess or destroy the object of veneration.

Primogeniture and Dowry

Another structure incorporated into the synchronicity of objectifications is primogeniture. Defined as “the right of the firstborn child of a family, esp. a son, to succeed or inherit property or title to the exclusion of other claimants,” primogeniture supports the feud by creating a surrogate son to continue the Capulet family name and act as chief combatant in the feud (*OED*). It is important for two reasons: first, Capulet is too old to participate as an active combatant. After Capulet demands his “long sword” (1.1.62) to engage in singles combat with Montague, Lady Capulet cries “A crutch, a crutch! Why call you for a sword” (1.1.63). Later, Prince Escalus addresses him as “Old Capulet” (1.1.77) and even Capulet acknowledges his age when he tells Paris “’tis not hard I think / For men so old as we to keep the peace” (1.2.2-3). Second, the “earth hath swallowed all my hopes” but Juliet (1.2.14). She is his last living child and “the hopeful lady of my earth” (1.2.15)⁴

Male heirs insured perpetuation of “paternal names, preserving lineages and thus family heritage” (Chamberlain 175). Capulet can use his wealth to offer a dowry that will simulate the impact of primogeniture on his family’s participation in the feud. Dowry provides an alternative to primogeniture in a family without direct male heirs. Once Juliet marries, Paris becomes the de facto son that would inherit Capulet’s wealth and continue the feud as an active combatant. The political, social, and economic advantages of the marriage are too important to Capulet. The marriage creates a kin-relation with Prince Escalus and gives Capulet a tactical advantage of two to one in young able soldiers. After Tybalt’s death, the pressure to complete the marriage increases for Capulet. His family is left without a chief combatant and he is in danger of losing the feud by default. Primogeniture would replace Capulet’s daughter with a surrogate son. Since it denies Juliet “equal rights of inheritance” and this in turn prevents her “self-

determination, authorization, and independence,” it objectifies her (Forste-Grupp 107). Her marriage to Paris is a form of sexual slavery that transforms Juliet’s body into a sexual weapon to be used against the Montagues (Kahn 5).

Juliet’s Companionate Marriage

The companionate marriage, envisioned by Juliet, helps define her new identity as a *feme covert* and is her most effective form of resistance to the patriarchal structures assembled against her. As a competing rite of passage in the world of the play, it threatens the arranged marriage proposed by her father. It has the ability to subvert the power of the feud by resolving the conflict between the Capulets and Montagues. The marriage destroys the clear lines of familial loyalty needed to continue the feud. Instead of enemies, the families would be related by marriage. Juliet and Romeo “separate themselves from their parents by forming an intimate bond with one of the opposite sex which supersedes filial bonds” and “preserve new identities as adults apart from the feud” (Kahn 6). It also undermines the feud by providing an alternative model for negotiating a marriage that does not depend on financial arrangements between men or parental approval. Additionally, it fractures the homosocial male friendship bonds demanded by the feud and replaces them with heterosocial marital bonds which require new allegiances and obligations between women and men. This model of marriage insists on equality between men and women; it also requires emotional, psychological, and physical compatibility before the couple marries. Mutuality of affection occurs before marriage; love exists on an emotional and physical level for the woman and man in equal proportions. The companionate marriage insists on self-determination and free will and encourages female subjectivity; Juliet decides who receives her hymen-dowry, not her father.

Juliet's Evolving Subjectivity

Juliet's view of her subjectivity begins to evolve even before experiencing love-at-first-sight with Romeo. Before the party, Lady Capulet asks her daughter "How stands your disposition to be married;" Juliet replies that "It is an honor that I dream not of" (1.3.66, 67). When she learns that "The valiant Paris seeks you for his love," Juliet knows that her transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert* is imminent whether she is disposed to marriage or not (1.3.75). Even after meeting and falling in love, Juliet maintains her sense of self and resists Romeo's attempt to objectify her as a "holy shrine" (1.5.91).

"True Love"

Since subjectivity is "discursively produced" and "constrained by the range of subject-positions available" within specific mode of discourses, women must use language that opposes Ovidian and Petrarchan discursive ideologies to experience even a modicum of subjectivity (Belsey 5). Shakespeare employs Affective discourse to disrupt and subvert languages that objectify and subjugate women. It is the language of equals in marriage with both women and men simultaneously occupying subject positions that lead to the realization of "intersubjectivity" that is, the "mutual realization of the self and other" (Gajowski 16).

Affective discourse is the foundation of Juliet's subjectivity and her most effective method of resistance. This is language that directly opposes the objectification and commodification forces inherent in the Ovidian and Petrarchan discourses men use in the play. Since it assumes "intersubjectivity," Juliet uses Affective discourse to define the foundation of her subjectivity, "true love," and to link that concept to the companionate marriage that she desires with Romeo. Affective discourse directly contradicts the arranged marriage's insistence

on the activation of coverture where the woman becomes absorbed into the legal, economic, and social body of her husband. Instead, “true love” (3.2.1) creates one person that is emotionally, psychologically, and physically equal and compels a companionate marriage; this “companionly ideal of marriage” is established on compatibility and friendship and is “the living embodiment of the Christian ideal of marriage” (Stone 155). Juliet’s teaches Romeo “true love” so that “he may speak the language of the beloved,” acknowledge her individuality, and support her subjectivity after their marriage (Maguire 68).

Romeo and Juliet presents “contrary interpretations of love” that must be resolved to insure the success of Juliet’s quest for subjectivity (Aliakbari and Abjadian 16). At the opening of the play, Cupid has wounded Romeo grievously; however, Rosaline, the object of his love obsession “will not be hit / With Cupid’s arrows” (1.1.195-6). Despite the fact that she is a Capulet, love is more important to Romeo than his loyalty to his family. Romeo’s Petrarchan conception of love is physically and emotionally painful. Love is created by “smoke made with the fume of sighs; / Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers’ eyes; / Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears” (1.1.177-9). It is “madness,” “A choking gall, and a preserving sweet” (1.1.180-1). Rosaline will not be persuaded to love Romeo by an orthodox formula of Petrarchan courting. She resists “the siege of loving terms, and will not be wooed by “assailing eyes, / Nor ope her lap to saint-seducing gold” (1.1.199-201). For Romeo, physical intimacy is a vital component of love. Rosaline possesses “Dian’s wit, / And, in strong proof of chastity, / From love’s weak childish bow she lives uncharmed” (1.1.196-98). Romeo reasons that if Rosaline yields to him, sex will validate their love and insure that she does not starve her beauty

“with her severity” (1.1.206). The combination of love and sex is reinforced in the orchard scene in Act 2, scene 2.

Hidden by night, Romeo rhapsodizes his love for Juliet with the clear implication that their love to be complete must include sex. Since “Juliet is the sun,” she should “Arise” and “kill the envious moon” (2.2.3-4). Calling on the moon’s association with the Greek goddess of chastity, Diana is “already sick and pale with grief” because Juliet “her maid,” is “far more fair than she” (2.2.6). Juliet should resist being a votaress of the goddess of chastity because Diana’s “vestal livery is but sick and green” (2.2.8-9). Romeo’s associates Diana’s “livery” with vestal virgins who are “marked by chastity or purity” (*OED*). Diana doubly suffers from being “green” with envy and with green sickness, an illness ascribed to young virgin women who suffer a “love sickness” that is “related to love melancholy” (Schleiner 661).⁵ One of the main cures for green sickness is “sexual intercourse” (Schleiner 665). Romeo uses mythologizing Petrarchan rhetoric to convince Juliet that physically consummating their love will prevent the malady of chastity that sickens the goddess Diana.

“True love” is the heart of Juliet’s idea of subjectivity within the companionate marriage that she demands of Romeo. He must acknowledge her equality and honor her subjectivity during their marriage. In the companionate model of marriage that supports “true love,” Juliet offers her hymen-dowry to Romeo as part of their marriage negotiations. Juliet’s hymen represents the physical manifestation of virginity and her promise of chastity within marriage. Romeo’s jointure is his acceptance of “true love.” Juliet envisions a marriage not only of spiritual and emotional equals, but a shared physical equality represented by “a pair of stainless maidenhoods” (3.2.13).

During the play, Juliet articulates her definition of “true love.” It is a “Conceit” richer in “matter than in words” where “substance” is more valuable than “ornament.” It is immeasurable; people who can quantify their love “are but beggars that can count their worth.” Her “true love” for Romeo has “grown to such excess / I cannot sum up sum of half my wealth” (2.6.30-34). She proclaims that her bounty of love “is as boundless as the sea, / My love as deep; the more I give to thee, / The more I have, for both are infinite” (2.2.133-5)

Juliet’s begins teaching Romeo “true love” at their first meeting. Upon seeing Juliet, Romeo engages in Petrarchan rhetorical tropes to describe her beauty. When he compares her with the other women at Capulet’s feast, Juliet’s beauty is “too rich for use, for earth too dear!” (1.5.44). Juliet rejects Romeo’s ritualized language, learned style of courting, and his persistent attempts to objectify her as a site of worship. She appropriates his religious metaphor and counters:

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss. (1.5.94-97)

While Juliet is aware that the feud will disrupt their experience of “true love,” she will not be deterred from loving Romeo. For Juliet, love must obey. She decries the fact that she has “Too early seen unknown, and known too late!” the man she is destined to marry. Their meeting has produced a “Prodigious birth of love” that is so potent that she must “love a loathèd enemy” (1.5.135-138).

At the beginning of the orchard scene, Juliet reveals one of the challenges to their experience of “true love:” coverture’s insistence that the woman become absorbed into the legal, economic, and social body of her husband. “True love” requires the willingness to forego traditional loyalties to family so that a man and woman may unite and form a new person joined by their spiritual, emotional, and physical love for each other. Romeo’s name represents an impediment; however, since a name is a social construct and cultural tradition, she proposes that Romeo unname himself so that together they create another person formed by their spiritual and physical love for each other. For Juliet the fact that Romeo is a Montague is irrelevant. She proclaims that Romeo is “thyself, though not a Montague. What’s a Montague?” (2.2.39-40). His name “is nor hand, nor foot, / Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part / Belonging to a man” (2.2.40-42). She describes the conflict between her beloved’s name and his inner self:

What's in a name? That which we call a rose

By any other name would smell as sweet;

So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called (2.2.43-45)

It is his name that is Juliet’s “enemy;” it is his “dear perfection which he owes / Without that title” that she loves (2.2.38, 46-47). To experience “true love” Juliet offers a trade. Romeo must “doff” his name and in return “Take all myself” (2.2.47, 49). However, if he cannot discard his name, she declares “be but sworn my love, / And I’ll no longer be a Capulet” (2.2.35-36). Romeo accepts Juliet’s trade and declares “Call me but love, and I’ll be new baptized; / Henceforth I never will be Romeo” (2.2.50-1). In a traditional Christian marriage, Juliet “must abandon her family name to take that of her husband.” Her identity and family loyalty is expected to shift from Capulet to Montague; however, “both Romeo and Juliet are viewed as

capable of shedding their name in marriage” (Maguire 54). When Juliet asks “Art thou not Romeo and a Montague?” he replies “Neither, fair maid, if either thee dislike” (2.2.60, 61).

They are now free to create a new self, where “Two hearts beat as one” (U2).

If Romeo returns her declaration of love she will “prove more true / Than those that have more cunning to be strange” (2.2.100-01). However, Romeo continues to understand love in strictly Petrarchan terms. He begins his vow of love with the stock exaggeration of swearing by the “yonder-blessed moon” (2.2.107). Juliet unremittingly subverts Romeo’s efforts to use characteristic Petrarchan gestures in their courtship. When Romeo asks what he should swear his love by, Juliet tells him not to swear at all, but if he must he should “swear by thy gracious self, / Which is the god of my idolatry, / And I’ll believe thee” (2.2.113-15). And while she has “joy” in Romeo, she has “no joy of this contract tonight. / It is too rash, to unadvised, too sudden” (2.2.116-18). For Juliet, their love exists only as a possibility. Their “bud of love, by summer’s ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet” (2.2.121-22).

Juliet then reveals the most important condition of “true love”:

If thy bent of love be honorable,

They purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,

By one that I’ll procure to come to thee,

Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite. (2.2.143-46)

Once their marriage has been solemnized, Juliet will “all my fortunes at thy foot I’ll lay / And follow thee my lord throughout the world” (2.2.147-48).

The audience witnesses the effect of “true love” on Romeo. When he meets Friar Laurence, Romeo reveals that he has forgotten Rosaline and “that name’s woe” (2.3.46). His

“heart’s dear love” is Juliet and they “must combine / By holy marriage” (2.2.57, 60-61). Juliet understands that once she is married she will become a *feme covert* and be absorbed into the legal, economic, and social body of her husband. However, since Romeo accepts “true love,” they will be equals. This equality allows Juliet to retain her subjectivity within the patriarchally imposed restrictions of marriage.

Juliet’s Control of Her Body

As an essential characteristic of her subjectivity and resistance, Juliet exercises unyielding control of her body. During her family’s “old accustomed feast,” Juliet allows Romeo to take her hand. Although she begins to experience love-at-first-sight during her first meeting with Romeo, Juliet deflects his Petrarchan impulse to convert her hand into a “holy shrine” (1.5.91). Yet, she permits him to kiss her twice; first, as a courtesy “within the framework of Renaissance greeting habits;” and the second kiss as a signal that she accepts him as a suitor (Honegger 75). To regain control of his courting and her body, she chides that Romeo kisses “by the book” (1.5.107). Juliet simultaneously reproaches Romeo for his uninspired stilted courtship, endeavors to “re-establish her interactional sovereignty” as well as “motivate Romeo to abandon his Petrarchan effusions” (Honegger 80).

In the orchard scene in Act 2, scene 2, Romeo asks “O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?” (2.2.125); Romeo requires physical consummation of their exchange of love vows; Juliet demands to know: “What satisfaction canst thou have tonight?” (2.2.126). This is both a request “for disambiguation” and an implicit declaration that she controls her body (Honegger 80). Juliet reveals the conditions that will lead to physical consummation of their love and payment of her hymen-dowry. Romeo’s “bent of love” must “be honorable” and his “purpose

marriage” (2.2.143-44). He needs to prepare and “perform the rite” of marriage by the next day (2.2.146). If he meets these conditions, Juliet pays her hymen-dowry. However, the “possibility that . . . Romeo is merely an amorous predator crosses” Juliet’s mind (Watson and Dickey 132). If Romeo does not fulfill her stipulations, Juliet demands that he “cease thy strife and leave me to my grief” (2.2.152).

Juliet’s reaction to Romeo’s exile from Verona strengthens audience members’ awareness of her insistent control of her body. She tries to delay her marriage to Paris, preventing a bigamous marriage that would dishonor Romeo. Because Tybalt’s death deprives the Capulets of their family champion, Capulet is forced to hasten the marriage of Juliet and the County Paris. Capulet is adamant in giving Juliet “to my friend” (3.5.193) and threatens to disown her if she disobeys. Juliet begs her mother to “Delay this marriage for a month, a week” (3.5.201) so that she can formulate a plan or at least consult Romeo. Threatened with exile from her home by her father and abandoned by her mother, Juliet seeks help from the Nurse. Since Romeo is “dead, or as good he were / As living here and you no use to him” (3.5.226-27), the Nurse declares “I think it best you married with the County Paris” (3.5.219). Juliet rejects the Nurse’s advice and announces that she will go “to the Friar to know his remedy. / If all else fail, myself have power to die” (3.5. 243-44). Since “God joined” her “heart and Romeo’s” and Friar Laurence “sealed” their hand in holy matrimony, Juliet again threatens to commit suicide rather than marry Paris (4.1.55, 56). Juliet’s subjectivity requires she live as Romeo’s “unstained wife” (4.1.88). To maintain her chastity within marriage she is willing to “leap from battlements,” “walk in thievish ways,” “lurk / Where serpents are,” or be chained “with roaring beasts” (4.1.77-80). In the final scene of the play, Juliet, proving “her fidelity by suicide” (Watts 27),

exercises final control of her body; she takes Romeo's "happy dagger," stabs herself, and quietly dies (5.3.169).

Juliet, Sexuality, and the Hymen-Dowry

One essential component of Juliet's control of her body and an attribute of "true love" is her desire to consummate her marriage to Romeo and experience her sexuality. Consummation makes their marriage irrevocable and completes her transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert*. During the course of the play, Juliet's plan for accessing her sexuality conforms to the early modern English idea regarding women and sex. With marriage, she has "bought the mansion of love, / But not possessed it, and though I am sold, / Not yet enjoyed" (3.2.26-28). Since Juliet directly links "romantic love and sexuality" and connects both to marriage, it is crucial to understanding the evolution of her subjectivity during the course of the play (Begley, Coe, and Talmer 2). Although she lives in a culture where men assume they control women's bodies, Juliet appropriates the patriarchal prerogative of giving her virginity to the man that she chooses to marry and anticipates the physical confirmation of their marriage. She longs for "civil night" so that she may bestow her virginity upon Romeo (3.2.10). Eagerly anticipating their first sexual experience, Juliet imagines her orgasm at the moment of their first sexual climax. She declares that "when I shall die" she will take Romeo "and cut him out in little stars, / And he will make the face of heaven so fine / That all the world will be in love with night / And pay no worship to the garish sun" (3.2.22-25). Bestowing her hymen-dowry to Romeo represents the ultimate expression of her control of her body and is an act of resistance that subverts her father's authority to give her body to a stranger. The hymen exists as a physical object; in the play, it is the physical representation of Juliet's virginity and by extension her subjectivity, since only she

can choose the man who will receive her hymen-dowry. It symbolizes a woman's virginity and purity and it is emblematic of a virtuous modest woman and the promise of chastity within marriage.

Juliet desires to bestow her hymen to Romeo. Since they have exchanged expressions of love and vows of marriage, they will exchange virginites and both access their sexuality for the first time in the consummation of their marriage. Juliet's payment of her hymen-dowry completes their marriage ritual and completes the transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert* wresting control of her physical body from her father and the County Paris. Unlike a monetary dowry, Juliet's hymen-dowry can never be reclaimed or returned. The exchange of virginites has a number of important implications in the play. Romeo must break the homosocial male friendship bonds that he enjoyed earlier in the play. Since their marriage ritual is now complete, Juliet and Romeo create new heterosocial marital bonds that create a household that is neither Capulet nor Montague demanding a realignment of family loyalties.

Juliet's Subjectivity after Marriage

After their marriage, Juliet understands subjectivity in terms of her role as Romeo's wife. Once their marriage is consummated, Juliet declares that Romeo is her "Love, lord, ay, husband, friend!" (3.2.43). These roles define the boundaries of their relationship and her present subjectivity. Since "true love" is the foundation of their marriage, Juliet's declaration that Romeo is her "lord" and "husband" acknowledges the social and legal roles that Juliet will inhabit as his wife. Describing Romeo as "friend," (glossed by Callaghan as lover), confirms their access to Juliet's sexuality within the boundaries of their marriage (3.5.43). Tybalt's death does not diminish Juliet's desire to be Romeo's wife. While she laments her cousin's death, she

mourns for her husband's banishment. She moans "'Romeo is banished!' / There is no end, no limit, measure, bound, / In that word's death. No words can that woe sound" (3.2.124-25). She is adamant in her fidelity to her husband. Her subjectivity is encapsulated in her desire to "To live an unstained wife to my sweet love" (4.1.88).

Liebestod and Juliet's Quest for Subjectivity

Just as Juliet seeks to create and occupy a liminal space between *feme sole* and *feme covert* to maintain her subjectivity, the suicides of the young married lovers creates "borderlands of meaning" that transcends, "extends and redefines" the boundary between love and death that allow Juliet's quest to succeed. (MacKenzie 23). Shakespeare connects love and death throughout the play. The opening Prologue announces that the "two hours traffic of our stage" will be the "fearful passage of their death marked love" (Prologue 12, 9). Juliet and Romeo connect love and death in the orchard, Act 2, scene 2; Juliet warns Romeo that if her kinsmen "see thee, they will murder thee;" Romeo replies that "My life were better ended by" her family's hate "Than death prorogued wanting thy love" (2.2.70, 77-8). Later in Act 2, Romeo declares that "love-devouring death do what he dare, / It is enough I may but call her mine" (2.6.7-8). After learning that her beloved has been banished, Juliet links death, love, and marriage when she exclaims that she will die "maiden-widowèd" and "death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead" (3.2.135, 137). After discovering Juliet dead, "Capulet construes her 'demise' in terms of a sexual liaison with Death" (MacKenzie 29). Death has "deflowered" Juliet and now that their marriage is consummated; "Death is my son-in-law" and "heir" (4.5.37, 38). Romeo, believing Juliet dead, drinks a toast "to my love," swallows poison, kisses Juliet, and dies (5.3.119). Juliet, finding Romeo dead, kisses him and kills herself with his dagger. In a

grisly renewal of their marriage vows, the couple is joined forever in death and lie together in the Capulet family tomb.

To honor their children, Capulet and Montague, negotiate a macabre dowry and jointure. Capulet proposes that Montague agree to peace as his “daughter’s jointure”; Montague adds to the jointure of peace by announcing that he “will raise her statue in pure gold” to honor “true and faithful Juliet” (5.3.297, 299, 302). Finally, Capulet will provide a golden statue of Romeo to lie beside Juliet’s as her dowry. Juliet’s and Romeo’s deaths represent “a *liebestod*, a love/death in which the bitterness of death is mitigated by the sense of a union for these star-crossed lovers who can no longer find it in life” (Wells 27).

Chapter 4: “A lady richly left” (1.1.160)

The financial bonds negotiated during the first half of *The Merchant of Venice*, would be familiar to Shakespeare’s audience. In a society with an ascending merchant class, “Shakespeare’s audience would have negotiated commercial agreements, marriage settlements, employment, and other contractual matters” in their daily business and personal lives (Sokol, *Law* 3). Shakespeare uses three financial bonds in the play: the “handsale” bond between Bassanio and Antonio, the “double bond” agreement between Antonio and Shylock, and the Dowry Lottery, a type of performance bond. Similar to the double bond that Antonio pledges for Bassanio, the Dowry Lottery transfers wealth between men of the merchant class creating a legal obligation for satisfying the bond, defining the scope of a commercial affiliation, and creating a social relationship within the socio-economic world of the play.

Since Bassanio needs 3,000 ducats to hold “rival place” with Portia’s suitors, he contracts a handsale bond with Antonio to “get clear of all of the debts I owe” (1.1.173, 133). The “handsale” is an informal agreement to borrow money generally “memorialized by shaking hands” (Garner 732). While it is a private loan arrangement, it includes a tacit promise to repay the loan. Because Bassanio has “disabled” his estate, the handsale offers Antonio his only realistic opportunity to recover the money that he loaned his young friend (1.1.122). If his venture to win the Lottery succeeds, Bassanio repays the money. Since Antonio has risked his wealth on mercantile adventures and does not have the “present sum” to loan, he contracts a “double bond” with Shylock to borrow 3,000 ducats for three months. The double bond “was a deed, or sealed instrument of obligation often used for arranging debt popular because it insured timely repayment. It was very widely used in early modern England whenever substantial funds

were borrowed as it offered lenders both strong security and great ease of enforcement" (Sokol, *Language* 36).

While the bonds negotiated by Bassanio, Antonio, and Shylock are important, the Dowry Lottery is the most important financial bond in the play. Similar to the "double bond" negotiated between Antonio and Shylock, the Lottery is a performance bond that requires its terms be satisfied before payment is made. Once the casket containing Portia's "fair counterfeit" is selected, the winner claims "her with a loving kiss" (3.2.119, 142) and sanctifies the marriage immediately, thus satisfying the terms of the bond; Bassanio marries Portia and receives the wealth of Belmont as her dowry. As Karen Newman declares: "The exchange of Portia from her father via the caskets to Bassanio is the ur-exchange upon which the main bond plot is based: it produces Bassanio's request for money from Antonio and in turn the bond between Bassanio and Antonio that permit Bassanio's courtship" ("Portia's Ring," 109). It necessitates the double bond between Antonio and Shylock and leads directly to Bassanio's marriage to Portia. The Dowry Lottery is the first stage of opportunity appropriated by Portia in her quest to preserve the subjectivity she enjoyed before her marriage to Bassanio.

"The will of a living daughter" (1.2.18-9)

Shakespeare exploits the conflict between appearance and reality throughout the play as the structure upon which Portia builds her quest. Once the Dowry Lottery has selected the ideal husband, Portia devises the ring test to uncover the strength of Bassanio's fidelity to her after their marriage. After learning of Antonio's peril and Bassanio's obligation "in money and in love" to his friend, Portia contrives a ruse that allows her to participate in Antonio's bond forfeiture trial (1.1.130). She understands that the trial provides the opportunity to replace the

male homosocial friendship bond between Antonio and Bassanio with a heterosocial marital bond between Portia and Bassanio that will allow her quest to succeed. When the trial concludes, Portia tricks Bassanio into giving her the ring he swore to keep until death. Shakespeare, in the final scene of the play, shows Portia returning her ring to a chagrined Bassanio and humiliated Antonio.

“The will of a dead father” (1.2.19)

The audience’s initial opinion of Portia’s subjectivity is shaped by Bassanio description of her at the beginning of the play. She is described as “a lady richly left,” “fair,” and of “wondrous virtues.” Belmont’s Portia is treasured for her wealth, beauty, and intrinsic qualities. Bassanio objectifies Portia by mythologizing her inner qualities and outer beauty; she is “nothing undervalued / To Cato’s daughter, Brutus’ Portia” (1.1.164-5). She is equal to Brutus’ Portia, valorized for her familial roles as daughter and wife and as the “archetypal devoted and stoical Roman matron” (*Chambers Dictionary*).¹ Belmont Portia’s “sunny locks / Hang on her temples like a golden fleece” and transforming Belmont to “Colchos’ strand” (1.1.168-170). The “Jasons” that “come in quest of her” are the suitors that seek to win the Dowry Lottery and Portia in marriage (1.1.171). Since Bassanio is trying to convince Antonio to lend him money to become one of the “Jasons,” he commodifies her as a prize that promises great wealth and a way for Antonio to recover the money that he has loaned Bassanio.

Shakespeare reinforces the audiences’ initial impression of Portia as the prisoner of Belmont and the commodified prize in the Dowry Lottery. When Portia first appears on stage, she displays an air of ennui. She complains to Nerissa that her “little body is aweary of this great world” (1.2.2) because she “may neither choose” her own husband nor “refuse” to marry the man

that wins the Dowry Lottery (1.2.17-18). Portia reveals that “the lott’ry of my destiny / Bars me the right of voluntary choosing” (2.1.15-16). Since she is required to manage the estate and conduct the Lottery ceremony, Portia’s subjectivity at the beginning of the play appears to be non-existent. In addition, she is burdened with an obligation of hospitality for any man who wishes to compete in the Lottery.

“Queen o’er myself” (3.2.169)

As the play progresses, the audience learns that Portia possesses a substantial degree of subjectivity. She is “the lord” and “master” of Belmont, controlling the estate, its considerable wealth, and her servants; she retains that mastery throughout the play (3.2.167-8). Portia controls access to the caskets and is keeper of the keys that will unlock them. Even though Morocco demands to make his selection as soon as he arrives, Portia compels him to first swear the oath in the temple and eat dinner before his “hazard shall be made” (2.1.45). Conversely, she allows Bassanio to make his choice immediately after his arrival.

Portia supports the Dowry Lottery’s purpose of selecting her ideal husband. When Nerissa announces that some of the “lords” are determined to leave “unless you may be won by some other sort than your father’s imposition depending on the caskets,” Portia replies: “If I live to be as old as Sibylla, I will die as chaste as Diana, unless I be obtained by the manner of my father’s will” (1.2.76-9). Even though the Lottery prevents Portia “the right of voluntary choosing” (2.1.16), she tells Bassanio that although she could “teach” him how to select the correct casket “but then I am forsworn, / So will I never be” (3.2.10-12).

The Dowry Lottery appears to be constructed on two patriarchal assumptions that Shakespeare’s audience would recognize: women have neither the intellectual ability to select a

suitable husband nor the financial acumen to negotiate a satisfactory dowry. Not only is Portia beautiful, she is rich and a potential target for dowry hunters. Since there is no male heir, Portia's husband will be the surrogate son of the dead Belmont preserving wealth inheritance by primogeniture. While the Lottery appears to restrict her choice of husband, in reality it is a sophisticated personality test designed to select the ideal husband for Portia, a young man who will allow Portia continued subjectivity after marriage (1.2.18, 19).

The Dowry Lottery is designed as a competition between men eager to win a wife with a considerable dowry. Although Bassanio's essential goal is to marry Portia, he borrows 3,000 ducats so that he might "hold a rival place with" Portia's suitors (1.2.173). The Prince of Morocco wishes himself good luck before he makes his selection because his success or failure to win the Lottery will "make me blest or cursed'st among men" (2.1.45). The competition is so intense that it leads to physical violence among the suitors. The "Scottish lord" receives a "box of the ear" from the "Englishman" and the "Frenchman became his surety and sealed under for another" (1.2.57-61).

Specifically, the Lottery is designed to select a young man of the merchant class "who chooses his [Belmont's] meaning," deciphers the riddle of the three caskets, and whose temperament will preserve Portia's subjectivity after their marriage (1.2.23). Since the correct casket "will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who" Portia "shall rightly love," Bassanio is the intended winner of the lottery (1.2.24-25).

Portia and her father have met Bassanio. When Nerissa asks "Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in the company of the Marquess of Montferrat?" (1.2.82-4), Portia recalls that "it was Bassanio" (1.2.85). They

know each other and have exchanged expressions of love. At the beginning of the play, Antonio asks Bassanio to “tell me now what lady is the same / To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage” (1.1.118-9). Bassanio reveals that he has received from Portia’s eyes “fair speechless messages” and that he has fallen in love with her before the events of the play (1.1.163). After winning the Dowry Lottery, Bassanio learns of Antonio’s peril and reminds Portia that “When I did first impart my love to you, / I freely told you all the wealth I had / Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman” (3.2.251). In an aside before he selects the lead casket, she reveals her love for Bassanio:

How all the other passions fleet to air,
As doubtful thoughts and rash embraced despair,
And shudd’ring fear, and green-eyed jealousy!
O love, be moderate, allay thy ecstasy,
In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess!
I feel too much thy blessing. Make it less,
For fear I surfeit. (3.2.108-114)

Bassanio has a personality that insures Portia will preserve her subjectivity after their marriage. Because he possesses neither money nor power, Portia “evades the possibility of marrying a powerful man in favor of an attractive youth whom she can dominate” (Russin 121). Portia uses the disparity in social status and wealth between them to “rule” Bassanio (Newman, *Portia’s Ring*, 26). He responds to Portia’s awarding of her dowry by tacitly recognizing their social and economic disparity “and its effects by metaphorically making her the master” in their marriage (Newman, *Portia’s Ring*, 26). Referring to her as “Madam,” he is “bereft” of “all

words, / Only my blood speaks to you in my veins, / And there is such confusion in my powers” that he can only hear the “buzzing pleased multitude.” He equates Portia’s declaration to “some oration fairly spoke / By a beloved prince” in which nothing is recognizable “save of joy / Expressed, and not expressed” (3.2.175-183).

Portia believes that Bassanio, a “Venetian scholar and soldier” in service to “the Marquess of Montferrat,” is “best deserving a fair lady” like herself (1.2.82-4). Her aversion to the aristocratic suitors is clear. She describes the “Neapolitan prince” as a “colt” whose mother “played false with a smith” (1.2.29, 32-3). The County Palatine “does nothing but frown” and Portia fears he will become “the weeping philosopher when he grows old” (1.2.35-7). The “French lord, Monsieur Le Bon,” “Falconbridge, the young baron of England,” the “Scottish lord,” and “the Duke of Saxony’s nephew” all fall short in Portia’s appraisal of their intrinsic merit. Neither Prince Morocco nor Prince Aragon has the “complexion” or temperament to be a suitable husband for Portia.² They fail because they are “deliberate fools,” who only “have the wisdom by their wit to lose” (2.9.80-1). Both men are deliberate, “careful and slow in choosing,” and they deliberate, “considering and examining the reasons for and against a proposal or course of action,” before making their choice (*OED*). By contrast, Bassanio is the self-assured merchant-class risk taker that the Lottery is designed to favor. He declines Portia’s invitation to “pause a day or two / Before you hazard” and asks her to “let me to my fortune and the caskets” (3.2.1-2, 39). Unlike the two princes, Bassanio spends little time analyzing the casket metals or riddles.

Bassanio defers to Portia throughout the play. After winning the Dowry Lottery, Bassanio requires Portia’s approval to validate his right to claim her dowry; he says “stand I even

so; / As doubtful whether what I see be true, / Until confirmed, signed, ratified by you” (3.2.146-8). After Salerio, Lorenzo, and Jessica arrive in Belmont, he welcomes his friends with a greeting that emphasizes his uncertainty about his status as “Lord Bassanio:”

If that the youth of my new interest here
Have power to bid you welcome. — By your leave,
I bid my very friends and countrymen,
Sweet Portia, welcome. (3.2.218-222)

Portia confirms that “They are entirely welcome” (3.2.223). He accepts Portia’s command to solemnize their marriage and to leave before they consummate their nuptials. She demands and “retains the power to grant or deny her body even to her husband on their wedding night” (Artese 330). When Portia demands to “hear the letter of your friend” (3.2.312), Bassanio reads it aloud to her and when she orders “O love, dispatch all business, and begone,” Bassanio compliantly responds “Since I have your good leave to go away, / I will make haste” (3.2.319, 320-1).

The Lottery appears to be a simple test to select a husband. The candidate must “swear” an oath to abide by the rules in “the temple” before making his choice (2.1.40, 41). A Lottery player must agree never reveal the casket he selected, if he fails “never in my life / To woo a maid in way of marriage,” and if he selects the wrong casket “in fortune of my choice, / Immediately to leave you and be gone” (2.9.11-12, 15-16). The player must select one of three caskets: gold, silver or lead. If the player wins, their marriage must “be solemnized” immediately before the wealth of Belmont is transferred (2.9.6).

The Dowry Lottery design reveals that Belmont envisions a specific personality type as the ideal husband for Portia. The Lottery was designed in such a way that his intent is revealed

by an analysis of the metal of each casket and their accompanying riddles. The casket portion is a “test of wise love, the would-be lover having to discern and choose what is really good over what seems good” (Holmer 96). The riddles that accompany each casket reveal the suitor most willing to “give and hazard all” (2.9.21) and imply that “the greater fortune seemingly the reward of the greater risk” (Caldwell 362). This combination results in a suitor that most appreciates Portia’s intrinsic worth enough “to choose not the gold or silver she brings with her as dowry” (Boose 337). Further, the object and scroll recovered by a player reveal Belmont’s attitude toward the “complexion” (i.e. temperament) of each player who selected a particular casket. “But here an angel in a golden bed” (2.7.58)

The golden casket is meant to attract a self-centered young aristocrat, like the Prince of Morocco. The Prince rejects the lead casket because its inscription “threatens” and he will neither “give nor hazard aught for lead” (2.7.18, 21). Since men “hazard all” for “fair advantages,” he will never stoop “to shows of dross” that the lead casket represents (2.7.18, 19, 20). He rationalizes that lead is even “too gross / To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave;” (2.7.50-51) therefore, Portia’s picture cannot be in the lead casket.

The inscription on the silver casket reads “Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves” (2.7.23). Morocco reminds himself to “weigh thy value with an even hand” (2.7.25). His logic is faulty; he attempts to select the correct casket based on a self-referential perspective that does not consider Portia’s qualities and their connection to the caskets and the accompanying riddles. He continues his interpretation of the riddle by considering what he believes he “deserves.” He rejects the silver casket because he deserves Portia “in birth,” “in fortunes,” “In graces,” and “in qualities of breeding,” but most importantly he “in love I do

deserve” Portia (2.7.32-34). Winning the Lottery would validate his excellent qualities and confirm his opinion of his worth. Further, since silver is “ten times undervalued to tried gold,” Portia cannot be in the silver casket (2.7.54).

The inscription on the gold casket reads “Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire” (2.7.5). Morocco rationalizes that since men “From the four corners of the earth” come to “kiss this shrine, the mortal-breathing saint,” and since an angel can only be found “in a golden bed,” and because he possesses a “golden mind,” he chooses the golden casket (2.7.39--40, 58, 20).³ Morocco retrieves a “carrion Death” from the golden casket and discovers a scroll in an empty eye socket. The key to understanding the personality type that Belmont believed would choose the golden casket is in the lines of the scroll that chide Morocco. The scroll reminds him that “All that glisters is not gold” and that often appearances are deceiving. Even a golden tomb “do worms enfold.” The scroll admonishes “Had you been as wise as bold / Young in limbs, in judgment old” he would not have chosen the golden casket (2.7.65, 69, 70-1). “thou silver treasure-house!” (2.9.34)

The silver casket is meant to attract the older self-assured aristocrat. Aragon’s believes “Fortune” plays a significant role in selecting the right casket. It is “Fortune” that will lead him to his heart’s hope (2.9.19). He rejects the “base lead” casket because this casket would have to “look fairer” before he will “give or hazard” (2.9.20, 21). He rejects the gold casket because gold is what “many men desire” (2.9.31). Aragon interprets “many” to be the “fool multitude” that merely “choose by show / Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach; / Which pries not to the interior” (2.9.25, 26). He “will not jump with common spirits” nor be ranked “with the barbarous multitude” (2.9.32, 33).

Aragon selects the “silver treasure-house” because the inscription declares that any man that chooses it “gets as much as he deserves” (2.9.36). Since he does not “wear an undeservèd dignity,” and because his “estates, degrees, and offices” are the result of his “merit,” Aragon says that he “will assume desert” and opens the silver casket (2.9.40-1, 51). The Prince retrieves “the portrait of a blinking idiot” (2.9.54). He attempts to deflect his selection back onto Portia; he exclaims “How much unlike art thou to Portia!” (2.9.56). Aragon asks Portia, “Do I deserve no more than a fool’s head? / Is that my prize? Are my deserts no better?” Aragon interprets the riddle based on his understanding of “deserves” and does not consider that the riddles are meant to be solved as they relate to Portia’s qualities. The scroll admonishes Aragon that an older man should be wiser. Since silver in “fire seven times” was forged and if an older and wiser man had tried his judgment “seven times” he would not choose “amiss” (2.9.63-72). Yet, it is not simply age that imparts wisdom; some are fooled by the shadows of illusion and thus only enjoy a “shadow’s bliss” (2.9.67).

“But thou, thou meager lead” (3.2.104)

The lead casket is intended to attract a young risk taker of the merchant class; it is designed to be chosen specifically by Bassanio. When the caskets are revealed, his musing as he considers the caskets reveals a broader frame of reference than the Princes of Morocco and Aragon. He uses the language of law, religion, and commerce to decide which casket to choose. Although the “world is still deceived with ornament,” Bassanio will not be tricked in this way (3.2.74). He reasons that in law that “tainted and corrupt” plea may be made to appear good “being seasoned with a gracious voice” (3.2.75-6). Bassanio shifts to religion. He asks: “What damned error but some sober brow / Will bless it and approve it with a text, / Hiding the

grossness with fair ornament?" (3.2.78-80). For Bassanio appearances hide the reality beneath. Even "cowards, whose hearts are all as false / As stairs of sand, wear yet upon their chins / The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars" (3.2.83-85). Women can purchase beauty "by the weight" and "crisped, snaky, golden locks" are the "dowry of a second head / The skull that bred them in the sepulcher" (3.2.89, 92, 95-96).⁴ Bassanio rejects the "gaudy gold, / Hard food for Midas" (3.2.101-2). He refuses the silver casket describing it as a "pale and common drudge" fit only for commercial transactions between men (3.2.103). He is attracted to "meager lead" (3.2.104) because it "rather threaten'st than dost promise aught / Thy Paleness moves me more than eloquence; / And here I choose" (3.2.105-107).

He reveals his personality when he removes Portia's "counterfeit" from the lead casket. Instead of reading the scroll first, Bassanio uses Petrarchan language to describe Portia's "fair counterfeit." He sees "severed lips, / Parted with sugar breath" and "in her hairs / The painter plays the spider and hat woven / A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men." He wonders that the artist could paint her eyes since "having made one, / Methinks it should have the power to steal both his / An leave itself unfurnished." Bassanio proclaims that the "substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow / In underprizing it, so far this shadow / Doth limp behind the substance" (3.2.115, 118-122, 127—9). When Bassanio reads the accompanying scroll, Belmont's intent is clear. Portia's father knew that only a man that "chose not by view" would select the correct casket (3.2.132). There is still one condition to be met. The scroll continues:

If you be well pleased with this

And hold your fortune for your bliss,

Turn to where your lady is

And claim her with a loving kiss. (3.2.135-138)

Chance or luck seems to play a prominent role in winning the Lottery. As Henry Turner notes, "*The Merchant of Venice* demonstrates the preoccupation with chance, hazard, and venture is prominent throughout the play" (430). The Prince of Morocco speaks of "blind Fortune leading me" (2.1.36) as he prepares to select a casket. The Prince of Aragon asks that Fortune lead him to his "heart's hope" (2.9.20). Portia reinforces the idea that chance and luck will lead to success; she tells Morocco that he must "take your chance" at the lottery or "not attempt to choose at all" (2.1.37, 38). As the play progresses, the audience learns that neither chance nor luck determines the winner. Portia knows the winning casket; at one point she instructs Nerissa to "set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary casket" if it appears that the Duke of Saxony's nephew decides to play the Lottery, since she will never "be married to a sponge" (2.1.70-71, 73). Prior to Bassanio's arrival in Belmont, "Portia knows which casket is the money casket because the other two have been chosen and thereby identified" (Berger 29). Later, she admits to Bassanio that "I could teach you / How to choose right" (3.2.10-11).

"Such as I am" (3.2.150)

Following his display of "Fair Portia's counterfeit!" (3.2.115), Portia proclaims Bassanio the winner of the Dowry Lottery declaring "You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand, / Such as I am" (3.2.149-150). The audience would recognize Portia's oration as her submission speech containing standard tropes from the conduct book tradition describing the ideal qualities of the early modern English wife. Her declaration "Such as I am" is a rhetorical ploy that seeks to devalue her worth. Using monetary imagery that implies "her virtues would bear interest," Portia defines her present value to Bassanio by her insufficiencies (Harmon 91). She "would be

trebled twenty times myself; / A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich” (3.2.133-4). She uses an escalating scale of attributes that represents Bassanio’s prioritized estimation of her most desirable qualities—least to most: her intrinsic self-worth, her beauty, and the wealth that she represents. She expresses her desire to “stand high in your account / I might in virtue, beauties, livings, friends / Exceed account” (3.2.153-157). Shakespeare’s audience would accept her claim that she is “an unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpracticèd” (3.2.159) who wishes to be worthy of “a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier” who is “best deserving a fair lady” (1.2.82-3, 87). These self-deprecating value statements authorize “a Portia who epitomizes the patriarchal chaste virgin” (Schuman 52). While Portia admits flaws, she proclaims that she is happy that “she is not yet so old / But she may learn; happier than this, / She is not bred so dull but she can learn” (3.2.160-2). She acknowledges Bassanio’s superiority and her happiness “that her gentle spirit / Commits itself to yours to be directed / As from her lord, her governor, her king” (3.2.163-5).

Now that Bassanio has won the Dowry Lottery, Portia awards her dowry and declares her transition from *feme sole* to *feme covert*. She proclaims that “Myself and what is mine to you and yours / Is now converted” (3.2.166-7). Portia uses two masculine nouns to describe her authority prior to accepting coverture; she “was the lord / Of this fair mansion” and “master of my servants” as well as the feminine construction “Queen o’er myself” (3.2.167-9). She reminds “the audience that there was a similarly strong, intelligent and independent woman on the throne of England at the time of writing” (Crow). Portia appears to relinquish her masculine authority as well as control of her sexuality by affirming before witnesses that “This house, these servants, and this same myself / Are yours, my lord’s. I give them with this ring” (3.2.170-1). She

presents the ring, but warns that “Which when you part from, lose, or give away, / Let it presage the ruin of your love / And be my vantage to exclaim on you” (3.2.172-4). The ring symbolizes Bassanio’s control of Portia’s sexuality; by making her husband responsible for her chastity, Portia is abrogating her responsibility to remain chaste should her husband “part from” the ring in any way. Bassanio accepts the ring and announces that “when this ring / Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence. / O, then be bold to say Bassanio’s dead!” (3.2.183-5). The giving and accepting of the ring, their *verba di praesenti* statements, and the exchange of kisses create a pre-contract that only requires church solemnization to be considered a legally binding and indissoluble marriage.⁵

However, her submission speech is at worst a lie and at best ironic. Prior to making his selection, Portia objectifies Bassanio as a “young Alcides when he did redeem / The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy / To the sea monster,” using the same masculine rhetorical gesture that Bassanio used to mythologize Portia at the beginning of the play (3.2.55-7). As the husband that the Lottery was designed to choose, Bassanio is commodified as a conduit that allows Portia unfettered access to her father’s wealth by marrying a man that she controls psychologically and emotionally. He not only frees the wealth of Belmont for her unrestricted use, he provides a socially approved outlet that allows Portia to access her sexuality; a sexuality that she guards throughout the play. While her submission to her new lord “fits the moment,” Portia subverts the effect of her speech by “the way the lines move from possessions, through the paradox about sums, to the person in the midst of them all, ‘where I stand,’ who cannot be added up” (Barber 201). And “despite her words of absolute committal of her wealth and person, she never stops exercising proprietary rights” over the wealth of Belmont and her person (Tiffany 391). After

learning of Antonio's peril, Portia continues her control of Belmont's wealth by ordering Bassanio to pay Shylock "six thousand" ducats or even "Double six thousand and then treble that" to free her husband's friend (3.2.298). She is under no illusion that Antonio has been endangered "through Bassanio's fault" (3.2.300). She orders Bassanio "First go with me to church and call me wife, / And then away to Venice to your friend!" Their marriage will be sanctified in a formal religious ceremony but will not be consummated. She declares that "For never shall you lie by Portia's side / With an unquiet soul" (3.2.301-4). After Shylock's bond is paid, Bassanio is instructed to "bring your true friend along" to Belmont (3.2.306). Portia's insistence on a sanctified, but unconsummated marriage, allows her to preserve her subjectivity and retain her authority as the "lord" of Belmont. If Bassanio deserts her, the "gold / To pay the petty debt twenty times over," is proof that he is merely a dowry hunter and functions as payment for his continued absence (3.2.305). Should Bassanio die, she becomes a virgin widow no longer under the restrictions of the Dowry Lottery or the strictures of coverture; Portia is a beautiful young woman in control of a vast fortune and may marry or not as she pleases. If Bassanio returns with his friend and the ring, then Portia is assured of her husband's fidelity. Portia declares, that during Bassanio's absence, she and Nerissa "Will live as maids and widows;" however, as soon as her husband leaves Belmont, she begins the Ring Test to assay her husband's constancy (3.2.308).

"I give them with this ring" (3.2.171)

While the Dowry Lottery selects the ideal husband, the Ring Test allows Portia to judge her new husband's constancy. Constructed as a "legal bond," the Ring Test insures that Portia "retains her own interest in the titles she lends Bassanio, and she enters the bond on condition of

his fidelity” to its terms (Garrett 55). Showing an awareness of the male psyche equal to her father’s, the Ring Test, designed as an extension of the Dowry Lottery, is in place even before she learns of Antonio’s plight; this allows Portia to be “prepared to take whatever opportunity is offered to her” (Crow). Portia’s *verba de praesenti* statement acknowledging Bassanio as “her lord, her governor, her king” (3.2.165), Bassanio acceptance of the ring, his vow to keep the ring, and bestowing the kiss accepting Portia and the dowry creates a valid marriage and prohibits “marriage with any other person” (Sokol, *Language* 289). Even without consummating their marriage, they now enjoy “full married status” (Sokol, *Language* 289). Bassanio is required to keep the ring to prove his fidelity to Portia. Should he “part from, lose, or give away” the ring, Portia construes this as “the ruin of your love” and she acquires the “vantage to exclaim on” him (3.2.172-3). She will adopt a dominant (i.e. male) role in their marriage, retaining control of her sexuality, estate, and wealth. Portia enjoys important advantages from the Ring Test and her marriage. If Bassanio has contracted an earlier nuptial agreement, his marriage to Portia is annulled. If he suddenly dies, Portia’s status changes from *feme covert* to widow with concomitant increase in her subjectivity, freeing Portia to wed whomever she chooses or not wed at all. If Bassanio abandons her, she resumes her role as “lord” of Belmont unencumbered by the demands of her “father’s will” and regains direct control of the estate and its wealth. If Bassanio keeps the ring, then Portia has proof that the Lottery has selected her ideal husband.

Shakespeare’s audiences understand the giving and accepting of the ring as a symbolic gesture representing important metaphors.⁶ It represents her acceptance of her new status as a *feme covert* and the activation of coverture, fealty to her new “lord,” the transfer of the dowry, and control of her sexuality. Since the ring represents Portia’s “worthiness” and Bassanio’s

“own honor,” it possesses an inherent “virtue” that demands dedication to its care (5.1.198, 199, 197). Further, the ring signifies the heterosocial marital bonds that now exist between Portia and Bassanio that stipulate “her transition from filial to conjugal bonds” (Boose 336). When Portia bestows her “ring,” she relinquishes her roles as daughter to Belmont and lord of Belmont to assume the role of wife. As a *feme covert*, her individuality is subsumed into the “codified, hierarchical relation of men and women in the Elizabethan sex/gender system in which a woman’s husband is ‘her lord, her governor, her king’.” Since Portia has accepted “her place in rigidly defined hierarchy of male power and privilege,” she demands Bassanio valorize their marital bonds over all other social commitments (Newman, *Essaying* 67).

After Salerio, Lorenzo, and Jessica arrive in Belmont, Portia learns of Antonio’s plight and realizes the intensity of the friendship between her husband and his friend. Bassanio reveals that he has “engaged myself to a dear friend, / Engaged my friend to his mere enemy / To feed my means” (3.2.259-261). All Antonio’s commercial ventures have failed and his bond to Shylock is forfeit. Antonio is Bassanio’s “dearest friend,” “the kindest man,” and “The best-conditioned and unwearied spirit / In doing courtesies” (3.2.290-2). Because “Antonio’s jeopardy enabled Bassanio’s success,” he is obligated to save his friend (Scott 298). Portia capitalizes on “the ambiguity of Antonio’s injunction” (Berger 27) that “If your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter” (3.2.316-7). Realizing that the injunction is a loyalty test that requires Bassanio to choose between his wife or his imperiled friend, she immediately dispatches Bassanio to Venice. With her husband absent, Portia is able to activate the ring test.

Shakespeare’s audiences recognize that two types of affective bonds compete for Bassanio’s love: the homosocial male friendship bond between Bassanio and Antonio and the

heterosocial marital bonds connecting Portia and Bassanio.⁷ For her quest to be successful, Portia must rupture the friendship bond and replace it with the marital bond. As the second phase of the Ring Test, rescuing Antonio from Shylock is the mechanism that will allow her to create a new obligation that supersedes any debt between Antonio and Bassanio. To save Antonio and create this powerful obligation, she must enter the masculine world of the civil law court of Venice.

“Accoutered like young men” (3.4.63)

To save his friend’s life and to further test Bassanio’s constancy, Portia must perform an active role in Antonio’s bond forfeiture trial. Although she has publicly accepted her status as a *feme covert*, Portia orders Bassanio to return to Venice, redeem Antonio’s bond, and, then return to Belmont with his “true friend” (3.2.306). She reminds Bassanio that Antonio’s peril is “through Bassanio’s fault” (3.2.300). By emphasizing the significance of the friendship bond between Bassanio and Antonio, Portia plans to destroy it. Because the Venetian civil law court is a patriarchal jurisdiction closed to women, Portia creates the male alter-ego Balthasar, “a young doctor of Rome,” to enter this exclusively male space (4.1.152). Since Balthasar saves Antonio’s life and redeems Bassanio’s honor, they are compelled to redeem their obligation to the “young doctor of Rome.” When Portia reveals that she is Balthasar, the obligation to repay the debt transfers to her. She rescues Antonio “for her husband’s sake, and thus rescuing her husband from indebtedness or guilt for Antonio’s deed. She will thereby be garnering the debt, devotion, and allegiance of Bassanio” (Burns 196). This ruptures the homosocial male friendship bond between the two men and strengthens the heterosocial marital bond between

husband and wife. Portia uses Balthasar as “a vehicle for assuming power” as well as “to gain control over her sexuality while setting the terms for its use in marriage” (Howard 433)

To create Balthasar, Portia must divest herself of the feminine. She tells Lorenzo that she has “toward heaven breathed a secret vow / To live in prayer and contemplation, / Only attended by Nerissa here, / Until her husband and my lord’s return” (3.4.27-30). Shakespeare’s audience would consider Portia’s response to her husband’s absence as commendable and consistent with social norms for a wife whose husband is away from home. Next she orders her servant to Padua to “Doctor Bellario,” her cousin and renowned lawyer, and return with the “notes and garments” that will enable her disguise (3.4.50, 52). Portia and Nerissa will appear in Venice “accoutered like young men” and participate in Antonio’s bond trial.

For her disguise to be convincing, she will become a man of ambiguous sexuality. Portia will modulate her voice and “speak between the change of man and boy / With a reed voice” and alter her gait to “turn two mincing steps / Into a manly stride” (3.4.66-8). She will “speak of frays / Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies” about

How honorable ladies sought my love,

Which I denying, they fell sick and died –

I could not do withal! Then I’ll repent,

“And wish, for all that, that I had not killed them” (3.4.68-73)

She is so confident in the effectiveness of her transformation to a young law clerk that she tells Nerissa that “men shall swear I have discontinued school / Above a twelvemonth” (3.4.75-6).

Further, Nerissa, as Balthasar’s clerk, prepares the court by declaring that Doctor Bellario’s protégé awaits the court’s permission to participate in the bond trial. Since the Venetian court is

restricted to men, no one would expect a woman, even one disguised as a man, to appear. Even Bassanio and Gratiano will be fooled by their transformation into men certain “they shall think we are accomplished / With that we lack” (3.4.61-2).

“the cause in controversy” (4.1.153)

When Balthasar-Portia asks “Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?” (4.1.169) she begins by assuming the role of Justice.⁸ She appears as an impartial figure devoted to the resolution of the trial in a manner that is consistent with the laws of Venice and agreeable to both parties. Although Balthasar-Portia describes his bond as “Of a strange nature” (4.1.172), “the bond that Shylock proposes is entirely normal in form for its time” (Scott 287). His “relentless demand for ‘justice’ and ‘the law,’” creates a situation that “the men who dominate Venetian society seem unable to protect both Antonio and the appearance of law’s legitimacy” (Finin 33). Inscribed as the Jewish Other by a dominant Christian religious, political, and economic ideology, “Shylock’s status as alien truly dooms” his attempt to obtain justice and win the forfeit of the bond (Artese 332). When Balthasar-Portia asks, if Antonio can pay the bond, Bassanio offers to “tender it for him in the court, / Yea, twice the sum” (4.1.204-5). Further, “If that will not suffice, / I will be bound to pay it ten time o’er” (4.1.205-6). If Shylock insists on his forfeiture, Bassanio proposes to exchange his body for Antonio’s; he offers the “forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart” (4.1.207). A desperate Bassanio asks the Duke to “Wrest once the law to your authority. / To do a great right, do a little wrong” (4.1.210-1). Balthasar rejects his plea and proclaims that to “alter a decree establishèd” would subsequently “be recorded for a precedent, / And many an error by the same example / Will rush into the state” (4.1.214, 215-7). The legal and economic reputation of Venice is worth more than one merchant’s life. Portia

proposes that Shylock accept “thrice” the original bond and renounce the forfeit (4.1.229). This would allow Shylock to recover his original 3,000 ducat loan with “justifiable interest” (Cohen 44). Having failed to entice him with money, Balthasar-Portia attempts to persuade Shylock to be merciful.

“The quality of mercy” (4.1.179)

Balthasar-Portia acknowledges “both the validity of the bond . . . and the ideological power of the common law’s promised consistency” that is the foundation of Shylock’s insistence on payment of the forfeiture (Cohen 44). While Shylock is legally justified in demanding his “pound of flesh,” Antonio escapes death, if “the Jew be merciful” (4.1.177). Since the masculine Balthasar-Portia fails to convince Shylock to be merciful, she assumes the feminine persona of Mercilla, “Spencer’s allegorical queen of mercy and acknowledged avatar of Queen Elizabeth,” to deliver the mercy speech (Villeponteaux). Mercilla-Portia uses rhetoric as “an instrument of persuasion,” to convince Shylock to relinquish his bond; she pleads for mercy, not as impartial Justice holding the scales of equity, but as an advocate for Antonio’s life (Freeman 167).

Mercilla-Portia compares “the appropriate roles of mercy and justice in the qualitative case under investigation” (Freeman 168). Mercy’s principal quality is that mercy is not “strained,” but spontaneous, natural, and falls like a “gentle rain from heaven.” It blesses “him that gives and him that takes” (4.1.179-180, 181). Since a king’s “force of temporal power,” whose “awe and majesty” are symbolized by a mere “crown and scepter,” mercy is superior to “the dread and fear of kings;” therefore, “mercy is above this sceptered sway (4.1.185-8). It is a symbol of true human power that is an “attribute to God himself” and “When mercy seasons justice” men “show likest God’s” power (4.1.190, 192, 191). Mercy mitigates the “course of

justice” just as the equity courts temper the harshness of English common-law (4.1.194). This is not mercy that mitigates “justice for the sake of pity but mitigates (common) law for the sake of true justice” (Cohen 44). Shakespeare’s audience would also recognize the religious importance of mercy. Jesus declares in the Beatitudes that “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (*Geneva*, Matthew 5.7). In the New Testament, the Book of James declares that “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (*Geneva*, James 2.13). By giving Antonio mercy, Shylock will occupy an ethically superior position within a Venetian culture that has marginalized him as a Jew and a usurer. Not only will Shylock recover the 3,000 ducats plus substantial interest, Antonio will have a moral obligation to repay the debt of mercy that he incurred to save his own life.

Shylock demands “My deeds upon my head! I crave the law, / The penalty and forfeit of my bond” (4.1.201-2). Mercilla-Portia pleads for a “surgeon, Shylock, on your charge, / To stop his wound, lest he do bleed to death” (4.1.252-3). Although it is not expressly stated in the bond “Twere good you do so much for charity” (4.1.252-3). Shylock refuses; however, Mercilla-Portia “simultaneously represents tender mercy and enacts harsh justice” (Villemontoux). She warns that if Shylock “dost shed / One drop of Christian blood” in extracting the pound of flesh, “thy lands and goods / Are by the laws of Venice confiscate / Unto the state of Venice” (4.1.304-7). When Shylock attempts to relinquish his forfeit for three times the bond, Mercilla-Portia proclaims that he can only “have nothing but the forfeiture” (4.1.338). Shylock’s insistence on the letter of the law for payment of his bond transforms Justice into a tool of punishment and Since Shylock “hath refused it in the open court. / He shall have merely justice” (4.1.333-4). Resuming her role as Balthasar-Portia, she reminds the court that the laws of Venice demand that

any “alien” that by either “direct or indirect attempts” seek the life of a citizen of Venice shall be surrender half of his wealth to Antonio (the intended victim) and half to the state (4.1.344-6). To save his life, Shylock converts to Christianity. The bond forfeiture trial reveals that Portia is a character that “embodies a number of contradictions” (Villeponteaux). She skillfully occupies masculine and feminine roles; she is a woman playing the part of a man who assumes a feminine character associated with mercy to save her husband’s friend. When her efforts appear to fail, Portia discards the feminine for the hypermasculine role of avenging Justice wielding a sword in service to the patriarchal ideology that supports the male world of Venice.

“My lord Bassanio, let him have the ring” (4.1.444)

Antonio’s farewell speech during the trial scene reveals the intensity of the competition between wife and friend for Bassanio’s love. Antonio reminds Bassanio that he has “fall’n to this for you” (4.1.261)⁹ and declares that Fortune shows “herself more kind” (4.1.162) and “Of such misery doth she cut me off;” he will not outlive his wealth and experiencing an old age of “poverty” (4.1.267, 266). Antonio declares his love for Bassanio and asks that his young friend:

Commend me to your honorable wife,

Tell her the process of Antonio’s end,

Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death,

And when the tale is told, bid her be judge

Whether Bassanio had not once a love. (4.1.268-272)

How can a wife’s love compete with the love of a friend who has died for her husband? Antonio forgives Bassanio and asks that:

Repent but you that you shall lose your friend

And he repents not that he pays your debt.

For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,

I'll pay it instantly with all my heart. (4.1.273-6)

Bassanio is compelled to repay debts accrued between men. He declares that although Portia “is as dear to me as life itself,” but that “life,” “my wife, and all the world / Are not with me esteemed above thy life. / I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all / Here to this devil, to deliver you” (4.1.278-282). Gratiano reinforces this sentiment by declaring that “I have a wife who, I protest, I love; / I would she were in heaven, so she could/ Entreat some power to change this currish Jew” (4.1.285-7). Portia enacts the next phase of her plan to have Bassanio relinquish her ring.

The Duke orders “Antonio, gratify this gentleman, / For in my mind you are much bound to him” (4.1.401-2). Bassanio offers the “Three thousand ducats due unto the Jew” and Antonio pledges his “love and service to you evermore” (4.1.406, 409). Balthasar-Portia declines their attempts to satisfy their debt and all efforts at repayment because she needs to intensify their sense of obligation to the young lawyer. She declares, “He is well paid that is well satisfied, / And I, delivering you, am satisfied, / And therein do account myself well paid” (4.1.410-2).¹⁰ Bassanio replies that “Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further” (4.1.416). Portia relents and asks Bassanio for his gloves and for his “love, I'll take this ring from you” (4.1.422). Refusing to surrender his ring, Bassanio offers the young lawyer the “dearest ring in Venice” in place of the “trifle” (4.1.430, 425). Balthasar-Portia announces that she will have “nothing else but only the” ring (4.1.427). After she leaves without her husband's ring, Antonio takes advantage of this

opportunity to prevail in the competition for Bassanio's love. Antonio reinforces the obligation to repay the debt and reminds Bassanio that his love for his young friend almost cost him his life. He implores Bassanio to "let him have the ring. / Let his deservings and my love withal / Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandement" (4.1.444-6). Gratiano is sent after the disguised lawyer and his clerk with Bassanio's ring. The ring, signifying the "ruin" of Bassanio's love, transforms into Portia's "vantage" (3.2.173, 174).

Prior to returning to Belmont, Portia resumes her role as Lord Bassanio's wife and Chatelaine of Belmont to greet her husband and his guests. After their arrival, Portia directs a theatrical scene to enable the return of the ring and insure her quest succeeds. Portia does not challenge Bassanio directly, but uses Nerissa's quarrel with Gratiano and the loss of his ring as segue into her confrontation with Bassanio. Gratiano proclaims that Nerissa's ring is merely "a hoop of gold, a paltry ring" (5.1.145). Nerissa, as the surrogate for her mistress, reminds her husband that "You swore to me when I did give it you / That you would wear it till your hour of death" (5.1.150-1) and that for "your vehement oaths / You should have been respective and kept it" (5.1.153-4). Portia chides Gratiano for parting "so slightly with your wife's first gift" and boasts that "I gave my love a ring and made him swear / Never to part with it" (5.1.165, 168-9). She is confident that he "would not leave it / Nor pluck it from his finger for the wealth / That the world masters" (5.1.170-2). Gratiano, trying to mitigate his wife's anger, announces that "My lord Bassanio gave his ring away / Unto the judge that begged it and indeed / Deserved it too" (5.1.177-8). Humiliated, Bassanio reveals that his ring too is "gone" (5.1.186). Portia "transforms" the missing ring "into a weapon" that she will use against Bassanio (Berger 30).

Since the ring represents her virginity and dowry, it is a symbol of the “debt” he owes to his wife for her continued chastity and access to the wealth he now enjoys (Berger 30).

Portia swears “By heaven, I will n’er come in your bed / Until I see the ring!” (5.1.188-9). Bassanio seeks to “abate the strength of” Portia’s “displeasure” by explaining the importance of relinquishing the ring (5.1.196). Bassanio’s defense is based on the belief that the obligation to repay Balthasar for saving Antonio’s life supersedes, in fact cancels, any obligation that he has to keep Portia’s ring. He begins his explanation with two conditional statements: “If you did know to whom I gave the ring, / If you did know for whom I gave the ring” (5.1.191-2). Since he gave the ring to a man as payment for saving a man’s life, Portia should understand the inherent importance “for what he gave the ring;” however, he admits that although he gave the ring “unwillingly,” the gift is justified because “nought would be accepted but the ring” (5.1.191-5).

She peremptorily dismisses his explanation; Portia did not give the ring merely “as a ceremony,” but as an emblem of her “virtue,” “worthiness,” and his “own honor.” Surely, a ring so valuable would have kept him from parting with it. Using conditional language against him, Portia questions his commitment to protect the ring. She berates Bassanio: “What man is there so much unreasonable, / If you had pleased to have defended it / With any terms of zeal”

(5.1.201-3). Portia explicitly states her intention to cuckold Bassanio. She warns:

Let not that doctor e'er come near my house.

Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,

And that which you did swear to keep for me,

I will become as liberal as you:

I'll not deny him anything I have,
No, not my body nor my husband's bed.
Know him I shall, I am well sure of it.
Lie not a night from home; watch me like Argus;
If you do not, if I be left alone,
Now, by mine honor, which is yet mine own,
I'll have that doctor for my bedfellow. (5.1.221-231)

He must be eternally vigilant of Portia's chastity or he will be a cuckold. He is now presented with the key question that the ring test was designed to answer: To whom are you most loyal -- your friend Antonio, or your wife Portia?

Antonio tells Portia that since he is the "unhappy subject of these quarrels," she should not blame Bassanio for the loss of the ring (5.1.236). Portia agrees and her husband's friend is "welcome notwithstanding;"¹¹ she intimates that Antonio is as much to blame as her husband in the loss of her ring (5.1.237). Bassanio, still not willing to sever his bond with Antonio, attempts to mitigate his surrender of the ring as an "enforced wrong" (5.1.238). He admits giving her ring away; since the surrender of the ring was "enforced" by his obligation to repay a debt of honor to another man, she should "Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear / I never more will break an oath with thee" (5.1.245-6). Antonio, misreading the consequences of the scene being played in front of him, once again pledges his body as a bond for Bassanio. He tells Portia:

I once did lend my body for his wealth,
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,
Had quite miscarried. I dare be bound again,

My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord

Will never more break faith advisedly. (5.1.247-251)

Portia accepts Antonio's "surety" and administers the *coup de grâce* to their male friendship bond (5.1.252). Portia forces both men to perform an "inversion" of a heterosocial marriage ceremony, thereby creating the instrument for shattering the bond between Antonio and Bassanio (Artese 326). She forces Antonio to return the ring to Bassanio and make him "Swear to keep this ring" (5.1.254). When Bassanio recognizes the ring as "the same that I gave the doctor," she announces that "I had it of him. Pardon me, Bassanio, / For, by this ring, the doctor lay with me" (5.1.255, 256-7). A speechless Bassanio believes that he is a cuckold; however, Portia provides incontrovertible proof "from Padua, from Bellario" that she "was the doctor, / Nerissa there her clerk." Further, "Lorenzo here / Shall witness I set forth as soon as you, / And even but now returned" has not yet "Entered my house" (5.1.266-271). Bassanio, renouncing his bond with Antonio and attempting to save himself from emasculation by his wife, invokes the sexually ambiguous character Balthasar-Portia by announcing that "Sweet doctor, you shall be my bedfellow. / When I am absent, then lie with my wife" (5.1.282-3). The returned ring, now linked to the threat of cuckoldry, becomes an emblem of male chastity and female control of male sexuality.

"And we will answer all things faithfully" (5.1.297)

Portia's refusal to be bound by a strict male/female gender hierarchy demanded by the patriarchy, allows her to thrive in the masculine role of Balthasar-Portia, as the feminine symbols of Justice and Mercy during Antonio's bond forfeiture trial, as well as the wife of Lord Bassanio

on her return to Belmont. Her willingness to transgress gender boundaries combined with her intelligence insures success in preserving the subjectivity that she enjoyed before her marriage.

Portia's language reveals that she continues a dominant masculine role upon her return to Belmont. After arriving home, Portia announces "That light we see is burning in my hall" (5.1.87). When Portia announces that she hears music, Nerissa says that "it is your music . . . of the house" (5.1.96). She orders Nerissa to go inside and "Give order to my servants that they take / No note at all of our being absent hence / Nor you, Lorenzo; Jessica, nor you" (5.1.117-9). After Bassanio and his party arrive, Portia furnishes hospitality and gives good fortune to her guests and assumes the persona of a woman who "seems magically powerful and bountiful at the end of the play" (Villeponteaux). She presents Antonio with a letter where he "shall find three of your argosies / Are richly come to harbor suddenly" (5.1.274-5). She presents a deed to Lorenzo and Jessica "From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift, / After his death, of all he dies possessed of" (5.1.290-1). Her largesse makes Antonio "dumb" and Lorenzo declares that the deed is like manna dropped before "starvèd" people. Portia's "dispensation of the wealth underscores her commitment to controlling it" (Tiffany). She also retains control of her sexuality:

I am sure you are not satisfied

Of these events at full. Let us go in;

And charge us there upon interrogatories

And we will answer all things faithfully. (5.1.294-297)

Portia will consummate her marriage when she chooses. Shakespeare's final image of Portia "is of a woman almost godlike in her mercy, bounty, and grace," dominating her husband, managing her wealth and commanding her sexuality (Villeponteaux).

Jessica's quest to maintain her subjectivity after marriage is the most challenging in the plays under consideration. Not only must she resist the objectification that inheres to women in a male dominated culture, the patriarchal expectation of female obedience, and the cultural mandate that good women are chaste, silent, and obedient, she must overcome the anti-Semitism used to marginalize her father and inscribe him as the Jewish Other in Christian Venice. Her quest is complicated because she "stands at the intersection of two mutable early modern identity categories -- 'Judaism' and 'woman'" (Middleton 295).

Jessica struggles to enact "self-fashioning through conversion;" she seeks to exchange her identity as a Jewish *feme sole* to assume an identity as a Christian *feme covert* (Bovilsky 48). To achieve assimilation into her new identity as Lorenzo's Christian wife, she must breach two patriarchally inscribed boundaries: the border between Judaism and Christianity and the father's prerogative to negotiate an arranged marriage. Jessica's quest, like Katharina's and Juliet's, begins and ends with dowry: the dowry that she steals to elope with Lorenzo and the additional dowry Shylock is forced to surrender to "his son Lorenzo and his daughter" at the end of Antonio's bond forfeiture trial (4.1.385). Jessica, like Portia, is a prisoner in her own home. Shylock orders her to "Lock up my doors," and "Clamber not you up to the casements then, / Nor thrust your head into the public street" (2.5.30, 32-33). Shylock controls Jessica's speech and since "to be a subject is to speak," he controls her subjectivity as well. She tells Lancelet Gobo, "I would not have my father / See me in talk with thee" (2.3.8-9). Like the other women in the plays under consideration, there are obstacles that Jessica confronts. She must break the religious and familial bonds that she shares with her father and create a new heterosocial Christian marital bond with her new husband.

As a result of Jessica's decision to marry Lorenzo, she is forced to occupy varied and conflicting identities during of the play. She is a woman, daughter, Jew, boy, wife, and Christian whose "plethora of ambiguities" creates "a figure of multiplicity" whose complexity creates an identity crisis (Middleton 295). Her quest to maintain her subjectivity after marriage requires that she reimagine her subjectivity so that it conforms to the new reality that she must inhabit as a Christian.

The gentile men of the play ascribed Christian qualities to Jessica before she appears on stage. To Lorenzo, she is "wise, fair, and true" (2.6.57) and "gentle Jessica" (2.4.19). Gratiano proclaims that she is a "gentle and no Jew" (2.6.52). Jessica's qualities dissolve the boundary between Jew and Christian and she is exalted as "at once noble and gentile;" the gentle Jew transforms into a gentile wife (Metzger 52). When Lorenzo receives Jessica's letter, he announces "I know the hand; in faith, 'tis a fair hand, / And whiter than the paper it writ on / Is the fair hand that writ" (2.4.13-15). He reduces Jessica essential self to a "fair hand" with a quality of whiteness that symbolizes purity and virginity; qualities desirable for a virgin Christian woman. Lorenzo directly links the essential quality "whiter" to paper. This would allow Jessica to metamorphose into a white, blank sheet of paper that he can inscribe with a new Christian identity. Therefore, Jessica's theft, elopement, and secret marriage do not provoke censure by the Christian characters in the play; these events are recognized as part of the ritual that she must navigate to convert to Christianity and assimilate into Christian society.¹²

Her transformation into a gentile directly refutes Shylock's determination to maintain his Jewish identity. He possesses "a lodged hate and a certain loathing" for Christians (4.1.61). He tells Bassanio "I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so

following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you” (1.3.26-8). Jessica, to strengthen her new identity as a Christian wife, announces that she is “ashamed to be my father's child! / But though I am a daughter to his blood, / I am not to his manners” (2.3.16-9). Jessica's transition from Jew to Christian is not acknowledged by her father. Even after learning of Jessica's theft, marriage, and flight to Genoa, Shylock refuses to acknowledge his daughter's conversion: “I say my daughter is my flesh and my blood” (3.1.28). Salerio, to reinforce the Christian claim on the converted Jessica, declares to Shylock that “There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory, more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish” (3.1.29-31).

Jessica's disguise as a boy increases her identity confusion. She must traverse a series of oppositional and mutually exclusive subject identities that confound her desire to simply be Lorenzo's wife. She inhabits roles as girl/boy, heterosexual/homosexual, daughter/wife, and Jew/Christian. Unlike Portia, who relishes her role as Balthazar, the learned doctor of law, Jessica is “much ashamed of my exchange” (2.6.36). While Jessica desires anonymity, Lorenzo voicing his homoerotic desire for his boy/wife, assures her that although she is disguised “in the lovely garnish of a boy,” her disguise will allow her to escape Shylock (2.6.46). He reveals his desire to “have a faithful wife . . . and simultaneously enjoy all the pleasure he would achieve with a boy lover” (Greenstadt 963).

Religious law encoded in *Halacha* commands that Jewish religious identity is received through matrilineal descent; therefore, Jessica must divest herself of her Jewishness before she can completely inhabit her new Christian identity. Once their escape from Venice has been realized, Jessica and Lorenzo travel to Genoa to complete her conversion ritual. Since their

flight to Genoa has been funded by a stolen dowry, Jessica must rid herself of the money and jewels, especially Leah's ring, before continuing on to Belmont. Jessica squanders "one night fourscore ducats" and trades her mother's ring "for a monkey" (3.1.80-1, 88-9). Shylock bemoans the theft of a diamond that "cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort" and the ring that "was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor" (3.1.63-4, 90-91). When Jessica trades the ring, she simultaneously severs her familial bond and rejects her religious identity. The monkey transforms into "the malformed, Caliban-esque offspring of an unsanctioned union, and also a figure of Jessica, who has become less human in her self-reinvention and denial of her family of origin" (Penuel 268-9). Disposing of the diamond and the turquoise enables Jessica to enact a "symbolic castration" of her father (Penuel 268). By devitalizing Shylock, Jessica endows her Christian husband with an enhanced masculinity that justifies her transition from Jewish *feme sole* to Christian *feme covert*. While her sojourn in Genoa allows her to divest herself of the symbols of her Jewish identity, the audience is uncertain that Jessica's "salvation through betrayal" will succeed (Middleton 304).

"He hath made me a Christian" (3.5.15).

Acting as Everyman, Launcelot Gobbo, foregrounding an early modern English skepticism about Jewish conversions in general, articulates Shakespeare's audience's uneasiness about the legitimacy of Jessica's transformation into a Christian wife. Because "the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children," Launcelot insists that Jessica is "damned" (3.5.1-2, 4). However, he can only offer "a kind of bastard hope;" if "your father got you not" then she is "not the Jew's daughter" (3.5.5, 8-9). Jessica recognizes the dilemma that this situation represents; as the illegitimate daughter of an adulterous union, she knows that "the sins of my mother would be

visited upon me” (3.5.10-11). According to Launcelot, she is “damned both by mother and father” (3.5.12-13). Jessica’s declares “I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made me a Christian” (3.5.15). Because “Jessica's marriage reconstitutes her as a body, for according to Christian ecclesiastical and legal authorities, a woman was incorporated into the body of her husband in marriage, becoming both one with and subject to him” (Metzger 57). She relies on the activation of coverture to authenticate her conversion. When Lorenzo arrives, Jessica reveals that Launcelot “tells me flatly there’s no mercy for me in heaven because I am a Jew’s daughter” (3.5.24-5). Lorenzo “does not comfort Jessica or defend her claim to salvation” (Hutchins and Lofgreen 399) but shifts the topic of conversation by announcing that “The Moor is with child by you, Launcelot” (3.5.28-9). Even after Launcelot exits, Lorenzo shows no concern for the legitimacy of his wife’s conversion to Christianity, the consequent validity of their marriage, or the subsequent legitimacy of their children. He offers his wife no reassurance, but asks “How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio’s wife?” (3.5.56)

Jessica praises Portia, but it is meant to instruct Lorenzo; it is her attempt to confirm her conversion and valorize her role in their marriage. Since Lord Bassanio has “such a blessing in his lady,” he possesses “the joys of heaven here on earth;” however, if he does not value Portia “on earth,” then “he should never come to heaven” (3.5.59-61). Since “the poor rude world / Hath not her fellow,” Portia is essential to Bassanio’s earthly and heavenly salvation (3.5.66-7). Jessica implies that Lorenzo’s ultimate salvation on earth and in heaven depends on his acceptance of her conversion to Christianity as authentic. In her struggle to move “from margin to center” by abandoning “a wrong religion to a right one through marriage,” Jessica is prevented from occupying a legitimate claim to either her former Jewishness or her current Christianity

(Goldstein 330). Shakespeare's audience would understand that her conversion disregards her father's "patriarchal authority" over his daughter; therefore, "Jessica's disregard for that authority thus creates the first obstacle to a Christian audience's acceptance of her as a Christian" (Metzger 56). Another impediment is Jessica's inferior social status.

Prior to their escape to Genoa, Lorenzo forces Jessica to appear in public at "Bassanio's feast" in her disguise as a young boy and Lorenzo's "torchbearer." Although she wants to "be obscured," Jessica's "shames" are ignored by Lorenzo, who orders her to "come at once" so that he may display his boy/wife to his coterie of friends. Jessica is displayed at Bassanio's banquet as a trophy of Lorenzo conquest of an exotic Other who possesses male and female sexual possibilities. Upon seeing Lorenzo and Jessica, Gratiano announces the arrival of "Lorenzo and his infidel" (3.2.216). Acting as messengers, Jessica and Lorenzo relate Antonio's predicament. In that context, Jessica functions as the sole witness to Shylock's murderous intent. She recounts that her father "would rather have Antonio's flesh / Than twenty times the value of the sum / That he did owe him" (3.2.284-6). Later, Portia appoints Lorenzo as caretaker of Belmont responsible for the "husbandry and manage of my house" (3.4.25). Portia says that "My people do already know my mind, / And will acknowledge you and Jessica / In place of Lord Bassanio and myself" (3.4.37-9). Portia relegates Jessica to the role of wife and thus inferior to Lorenzo. Instead of being welcomed at Belmont as the wife of their friend and their equal, "Gratiano's order for Nerissa to 'cheer yon stranger, bid her welcome'" increases the audiences' perception of Jessica as a socially inferior outsider and adds to her isolation from the Christian community settled in Belmont at the end of the play (Middleton 302). Jessica's theft of her dowry and her flight from her father's house to marry a Christian sever the familial and religious identity that

she enjoyed at the beginning of the play. Since she is unable to secure her identity as a Christian *feme covert* in Belmont or return to her status as a Jewish *feme sole*, Jessica occupies a space of indeterminate identity.

“In such a night as this” (5.1.1)

Shakespeare uses the conversation between Jessica and Lorenzo at the beginning of Act 5 to reveal the emotional and psychological differences that result in Jessica’s failures: to resolve her identity crisis and her quest to maintain subjectivity after marriage. Lorenzo opens Act 5 by beginning a song-like duet with alternating voices to reveal the emotional distance between wife and husband. Since “The moon shines bright,” Lorenzo imagines that “In such a night as this, / When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees / And they did make no noise” that “in such a night” centuries earlier “Troilus, me thinks, mounted the Trojan walls / And sighed his soul toward the Grecian tents / Where Cressid lay that night” (5.1.1-6). Casting himself as Troilus, the faithful lover, Lorenzo attempts to force Jessica to assume the role of the unfaithful Cressida. Jessica refuses to inhabit the character of the unfaithful lover and conceives herself as Thisbe, who “fearfully o’ertrip the dew / And saw the lion’s shadow ere himself / And ran dismayed away” (5.1.7-9). Shakespeare’s audience would recognize the allusion to a woman who also suffered a forbidden love and who ultimately killed herself. Lorenzo attempts to cast Jessica as Dido, the Queen of Carthage, abandoned by the Trojan prince Aeneas. He imagines Dido “with a willow in her hand / Upon the wild sea-banks, and waft her love / To come again to Carthage” (5.1.10-12).¹³ Lorenzo’s cautionary refashioning of Jessica as the abandoned Queen suggests that he too will abandon his love and that Jessica will mourn his loss. Jessica conjures the role of Medea for herself in reply. She reminds Lorenzo that “In such a night / Medea gathered the

enchanted herbs / That did renew old Aeson” (5.1.13-14); Jessica implies that she has magical life-giving power, similar to Medea, that Lorenzo will never access, if he abandons her.¹⁴ In reply, Lorenzo insults his wife by reminding her that “In such a night / Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew, / And with an unthrift love did run from Venice / As far as Belmont” (5.1.14-17). He mocks her choice of a spendthrift for a husband. Jessica reminds Lorenzo that he swore “he loved her well.” He is responsible for “Stealing her soul with many vows of faith, / And ne’er a true one;” she is not responsible for the theft, the abandonment of her father, and their subsequent flight to Genoa (5.1.19-20); Lorenzo is. He counters by declaring “In such a night / Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew, / Slander her love, and he forgave it her” (5.1.20-22).¹⁵ Lorenzo inscribes her as a shrew for her slander of him; yet, without acknowledging an error or asking for forgiveness, he forgives her as an exercise of patriarchal power of man over woman. Jessica is willing to “out-night” Lorenzo, but she hears “the footing of a man,” ending their duet (5.1.23-4).

“I am never merry when I hear sweet music” (5.1.67)

After Stephano and Launcelot announce the return of Portia and Bassanio, Lorenzo converts Jessica from “shrew” to “Sweet soul” (5.1.47) to regain command of his wife’s language and thus her subjectivity. He diminishes Jessica’s individuality into a phrase that valorizes her as a spirit without substance who, as a sweet, “affords enjoyment or gratifies desire,” his desires (OED). Lorenzo tells Jessica they will wait for Portia and Bassanio “upon this bank” and while they are waiting they will “sit and let the sounds of music / Creep in our ears” (5.1.52, 53-4). The “Soft stillness and the night / Become the touches of sweet harmony” that evoke the music of the spheres (5.1.54-5).¹⁶ Lorenzo imagines that the Jewish Jessica does

not understand the concept of the music of the spheres and; he assumes a didactic role so that he can instruct his wife on this important Christian idea.¹⁷ The music of the spheres are played on “the floor of heaven” that “Is thick inlaid with patens of bright gold.” Where “not the smallest orb which thou behold’st / But in his motion like an angel sings, / Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubins” (5.1.56-60). Although mortals “grossly” enclosed in “this muddy vesture of decay” cannot hear this celestial music, its “harmony is in immortal souls” (5.1.63, 62, 61). The music that Lorenzo orders is a beacon of “sweet touches” that will “pierce” Portia’s hearing “And draw her home” (5.1.65, 66). This earthly music hints at the joys of hearing the music of the spheres.

Jessica declares in the last line she speaks in the play that “I am never merry when I hear sweet music” (5.1.67). Shakespeare uses Lorenzo’s reply to illustrate the emotional distance that separates husband and wife. Lorenzo declares that she reacts to “sweet music” with apparent sadness because her “spirits are attentive,” focusing only on the emotional impact that the music makes on her psyche.¹⁸ Lorenzo explains that her reaction is similar to “a wild and wanton herd, / Or race of youthful and unhandled colts, / Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud, / Which is the hot condition of their blood” (5.1.69-72). However, “If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound, / Or any air of music touch their ears,” they will “make a mutual stand, / Their savage eyes turned to a modest gaze / By the sweet power of music” (5.1.73-77). Lorenzo insinuates that Jessica’s reaction to “sweet music” corresponds to the reaction of “youthful and unhandled colts” because they do not have the human sensibility to appreciate neither mortal music nor the immortal music of the spheres. He declares:

The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus. (5.1.81-5)

Since “music has the power to influence celestial and earthly existences,” music has “the power to effect ideas, actions and relationships” (Wilson and Calore 399). Without music, Jessica will never “be trusted”; he commands her, “Mark the music” (5.1.86). Even after learning that “the rich Jew” has bequeathed a second dowry to Lorenzo by “a special deed of gift, / After his death, of all he dies possessed,” she remains silent (5.1.290-1). Jessica’s silence “subtly highlights the problem posed to the harmony at Belmont” as the play moves to the reconciliations of Portia and Bassanio and Nerissa and Gratiano (Berley 113). Bassanio, Gratiano, and Lorenzo are bound by friendship; Portia and Nerissa are connected by their mistress/servant relationship as well as their friendship. Jessica remains the Other in this company of friendship bonds; she is unable to occupy a role as a Christian *feme covert* or return to her role as a Jewish *feme sole*.

Chapter 5: Fathers and Daughters

“it is a wise father that knows his own child” (*The Merchant of Venice* 2.2.58)

The clown character Launcelot Gobbo’s statement in *The Merchant of Venice* concerning fathers and children suggests another important role Shakespeare has for dowry in the three plays under consideration. He uses dowry as a character development device to create father characters that possess complexity and depth as well as shows the authentic nature of the father/daughter relationships in the plays.

The Taming of the Shrew and the “merchant’s part” (2.1.319)

Dramatic performances of Shakespeare’s plays can shape audience attitudes about plays and individual characters for many years. I first saw Franco Zeffirelli’s 1967 movie production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in 1978 and the image that I will always have of Baptista Minola is Michael Hordern’s portrayal of a father harried by his eldest daughter and harassed by his youngest daughter’s suitors. Hordern’s Baptista is clearly afraid of Katharina and besotted with Bianca. His chief desire is to marry his eldest daughter first and gain “quiet in the match” (2.1.323). Baptista’s love for Bianca is clear in Hordern’s portrayal and it is in her marriage that he seeks social and economic advantage for his youngest child. However, this early image is not the genuine Baptista.

Shakespeare reveals Baptista’s authentic personality during the dowry negotiations for both his daughters. The audience learns in the dowry negotiations with Petruchio for Katharina’s marriage that he is cautious and shrewd. When Petruchio introduces himself as a potential suitor for Katharina, Baptista attempts to dissuade him to determine Petruchio’s seriousness as a prospective husband for his eldest daughter. When Petruchio asks, “Pray, have you not a daughter / Called Katharina, fair and virtuous?” (2.1.41-2), Baptista acknowledges that he does

and that sadly “She is not for your turn, the more my grief” (2.1.62). Petruchio presses Baptista: “I see you do not mean to part with her, / Or else you like not of my company” (2.1.63-4).

Baptista recognizes that Petruchio is a serious suitor. The ensuing negotiations reveal Baptista’s skill as a negotiator. First, he must determine his prospective son-in-law’s social status and economic resources. He asks Petruchio, “Whence are you, sir? What may I call your name?” (2.1.66). When he learns that he knows Petruchio’s father, Antonio, “well,” he tells Petruchio that he is welcome “for his sake” (2.1.69). Baptista’s welcome is Petruchio’s acceptance as a suitor and the dowry negotiations begin.

When he learns that Petruchio’s “business asketh haste, / And every day I cannot come to woo” (2.1.110-1), Baptista promptly sets Katharina’s dowry: “After my death, the one half of my lands / And, in possession, twenty thousand crowns” (2.1.117-8). Petruchio accepts with an offer of jointure and the negotiations are concluded; however, Baptista makes the dowry payment of 20,000 crowns conditional. Petruchio must first obtain “the special thing” (2.1.124) from Katharina. The audience would be aware that Baptista’s double entendres means that Petruchio must first win her “love; for that is all in all” (2.1.124-5) and that their marriage be consummated before the dowry is paid. Baptista accepts Petruchio and his offer of jointure and moves quickly to have Petruchio begin courting Katharina. Later, when Katharina protests that Baptista wishes her to “wed to one half-lunatic, / A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack” (2.1.180-1), he ignores her and turns his attention to Petruchio. When she does not contradict Petruchio’s statement that they have agreed to marry, Baptista performs a handfasting ceremony with Gremio and Tranio as witnesses. Once Katharina’s dowry has been negotiated and she is

married to Petruchio, Baptista turns his attention to negotiating the jointure for his favorite youngest daughter. The jointure auction reveals his shrewdness as a businessman.

He does not need to negotiate a separate dowry for Bianca: both daughters will receive the same amount of money and land. Just as Baptista used a version of primogeniture to insist on the marriage order of his daughters, he employs the idea again. He cannot be expected to give a larger dowry to his youngest daughter than he did to his eldest. The prearranged dowry for Bianca reveals that preservation of wealth is also a consideration for Baptista. While the 20,000 crowns and half his lands at death appear generous, it is not. Hortensio and Gremio both attest to Baptista's wealth. A rich merchant would have cash-on-hand, accounts receivable, business interests, money at loan, as well as valuable personal property, plate, jewelry and other household goods that would need to be taken into account when estimating his net wealth. Shakespeare provides the audience with evidence of Baptista's enormous wealth during Bianca's wedding feast when he offers to bear the cost of Lucentio's wagers and adds an additional 20,000 crowns to Katharina's dowry for her display of obedience.

Bianca's dowry is also conditional. Baptista announces that the man that "can assure my daughter greatest dower / Shall have my Bianca's love" (2.1.336-7).¹ Baptista devises and conducts a jointure auction designed to increase the wealth that ersatz-Lucentio will bid for Bianca. An equitable auction would include all of Bianca's suitors; however, Lucentio is absent and the aged Gremio is not a viable prospective husband for his favorite daughter. Baptista can reasonably be expected to have an accurate estimate of his neighbor, Gremio's, wealth; therefore, the auction is a mechanism for increasing the jointure that ersatz-Lucentio is induced into offering. Ersatz-Lucentio offers a vast sum for Bianca and since Gremio has "offered all. I have

no more, / And she can have no more than all I have” (2.1.374-5). Baptista does not demand Bianca’s approval or that the marriage be consummated as he did with Katharina, but requires ersatz-Lucentio to have his father “make her the assurance” of the jointure (2.1.380). He does ask, “If you should die before him, where’s her dower?” and seems content with ersatz-Lucentio’s reply that “That’s but a cavil. He is old, I young” (2.1.382, 383). Bianca will wed on the Sunday after Katharina’s wedding “if you make this assurance. / If not, to Signior Gremio” (2.1.389-90).

At the end of the play, the audience realizes that Baptista is not the helpless father that is fearful of his eldest daughter and beleaguered by his youngest daughter’s suitor, but a shrewd and capable businessman embodying the patriarchal attitudes and business skills representative of the emerging middle class in early modern England. His relationship with both daughters is shaped by their display of obedience to his patriarchally inscribed authority as father. Because she appears to be an idealized version of the chaste, silent and obedient daughter, Bianca is the favored child at the beginning of the play. However, as the events of the play conclude, Baptista’s favor shifts to the seemingly tamed and newly obedient Katharina.

“An you be mine, I’ll give you to my friend” (*Romeo and Juliet* 3.5.193)

Shakespeare introduces Capulet and Montague, the patriarchs of the feuding Veronese families, in Act 1, scene 2. And while they appear willing to engage in single combat with each other, their wives’ reaction to their war-like aggressive language leaves the audience with the impression that both are simply old men, full of bluster, and no fight, who carry on their family’s feud more out of habit than conviction. As the audience follows Capulet from the pre-dowry negotiations with the County Paris to the dowry he offers for his dead daughter in the last scene

of the play, Shakespeare reveals a character full of contradictions and inconsistencies—a character that makes assumptions that ultimately doom his family. He assumes that he knows what is best for Juliet; he assumes obedience by those subordinate to him; he assumes loyalty in the conduct of the feud.

Capulet and the County Paris appear together in Act 1, scene 2, after Capulet has met with the Prince of Verona. Paris, who has earlier asked to marry Juliet, inquires “what say you to my suit?” (1.2.6) Capulet attempts to deflect his suit. He tells Paris that:

My child is yet a stranger in the world.

She hath not seen the change of fourteen years.

Let two more summers wither in their pride

Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride. (1.2.8-11)

Paris’ insists that “Younger than she are happy mothers made” (1.2.12) and Capulet reminds him that “too soon marred are those so early made” (1.2.13). Juliet is his last living child and because the “Earth hath swallowed all my hopes but she; / She’s the hopeful lady of my earth” (1.2.14-15). Since the marriage of his daughter to a relative to the Prince of Verona is advantageous, he does not dismiss the idea of Juliet marrying Paris. His consent depends on Paris’ success in wooing Juliet. Since “My will to her consent is but a part,” if his daughter agrees to accept the County as husband, he will add his “consent and fair according voice” (2.1.17-19).

These pre-dowry negotiations provide the audience with the impression that Capulet is a loving and caring father concerned for his 13-year-old daughter’s happiness and health. Shakespeare reinforces the audiences’ favorable first impression of the Capulet family patriarch

by displaying him exuding an air of bonhomie as he greets the guests to his party. He jokes that any lady that “deny to dance” does so because she “hath corns” and to the gentlemen, he reminisces about the “day / That I have worn a visor and could tell / A whispering tale in a fair lady’s ear, / Such as would please” (1.5.17-22). However, the audience soon witnesses the contradictions inherent in Capulet’s public persona. When he hears Tybalt’s plan to challenge Romeo to a duel, Capulet praises Romeo as a “portly gentleman” who “Verona brags of” as “virtuous and well-governed” (1.5.63-65). The opinion of his guests and the citizens of Verona are important to Capulet; he “would not for the wealth of all this town / Here in my house do him disparagement” (1.5.66.7). When Tybalt replies that “It fits when such a villain is a guest. / I’ll not endure him” (1.5.72-3). Capulet’s anger erupts. He declares:

He shall be endured.

What, goodman boy? I say he shall. Go to!

Am I the master here or you? Go to.

You’ll not endure him! God shall mend my soul,

You’ll make a mutiny among my guests!

You will set cock-a-hoop! You’ll be the man! (1.5.73-78)

Tybalt claims that “‘tis a shame” for Romeo to remain at the party unchallenged; Capulet denounces his nephew as “a saucy boy” and a “princox.” This is Capulet’s first display of anger when his commands are thwarted. This makes his reaction to Juliet’s display of disobedience consistent with Shakespeare’s characterization of the family’s tyrant and bully.

Despite the Prince’s decree of the death for the patriarch who allows violence to return to the streets of Verona, Tybalt challenges Romeo to a duel in Act 3, scene 1. Mercutio and Tybalt

are slain. Lady Capulet demands “I beg for justice, which thou, Prince, must give. / Romeo slew Tybalt; Romeo must not live” (3.1.167-8). Lady Capulet is the advocate for revenge for her brother’s son; however, Capulet does not utter one word during this scene. This is the turning point for the Capulets in the feud. They have lost their champion and Lord Capulet must complete the marriage negotiations with Paris to replace Tybalt and avoid losing the feud by default. Capulet assumes obedience by Juliet and family loyalty by his young daughter as he tells Paris “I will make a desperate tender / Of my child’s love. I think she will be ruled / In all respects by me; nay, more, I doubt it not” (3.4.12-14). He sends his wife to Juliet to “Acquaint her here of my son Paris’ love” (3.4.16) and sets the wedding for Thursday. Even with his family close to losing the feud and “Tybalt being slain so late,” he announces that “we’ll have some half a dozen friends” to celebrate the nuptials. He orders Lady Capulet “Go you to Juliet ere you go to bed; / Prepare her, wife, against this wedding day” (3.4.23, 31-2). When Lady Capulet tells Juliet of her coming marriage; Juliet’s refusal prompts her mother to say “Here comes your father. Tell him so yourself, / And see how he will take it at your hands” (3.5.124-5). Capulet’s outrage at Juliet’s refusal is violent. He asks

How? Will she none? Doth she not give us thanks?

Is she not proud? Doth she not count her blest,

Unworthy as she is, that we have wrought

So worthy a gentleman to be her bride? (3.5.143-6)

He has expected her thanks for arranging a socially and economically favorable marriage. His reaction is focused on the family’s need to arrange this particular marriage and he never considers that the cause of Juliet’s reluctance is her grief for Tybalt’s death. Capulet orders her

to marry Paris at “Saint Peter’s Church” “Thursday next” or he “will drag thee on a hurdle thither” (3.5.154, 153, 155). Just as he reacts to Tybalt’s disobedience by calling his nephew names, he reacts the same with Juliet. She is a “green-sickness carrion,” a “baggage,” a “tallow face,” and a “disobedient wretch.” If she does not marry Paris, Juliet can “never after look me in the face” (3.5.156, 157, 160). He threatens Juliet with physical violence when he declares “My fingers itch” (3.5.164) Capulet declares:

An you be mine, I’ll give you to my friend;

An you be not, hang, beg, starve, die in the streets,

For, by my soul, I’ll ne’er acknowledge thee,

Nor what is mine shall never do thee good.

Trust to ’t; bethink you. I’ll not be forsworn. (3.4.193-7)

Lord Capulet appears at the beginning of Act 4, scene 2. He is planning a party with “So many guests” that he needs to hire “twenty cunning cooks” (4.2.1-2). The brief mourning period for Tybalt is over. Earlier, he feared public opinion should Tybalt attack Romeo at the party; now Capulet’s willingness to ignore the social conventions of mourning is another inconsistency in his personality. Capulet needs Juliet’s marriage to the kinsman of the Prince to help secure his family’s survival in the feud; he imagines Paris as their champion. Later, he learns that Juliet has gone to visit Friar Laurence and hopes that the Friar “may chance to do some good to her” and describes Juliet’s disobedience as “A peevish self-willed harlotry” (4.2.12-13). When Juliet kneels and asks for her father’s forgiveness, he says nothing to his daughter that displays any genuine affection for her. Instead, he orders someone to “Send for the County! Go tell him of this. / I’ll have this knot knit up tomorrow morning” (4.2.22-3).

Juliet's capitulation to her father's demand that she marry Paris appears complete. She tells her father that:

I met the youthful lord at Laurence' cell
And gave him what becomèd love I might,
Not stepping o'er the bounds of modesty. (4.2.24-6)

Capulet's proclaims "Why, I am glad on't. This is well. Stand up. / This is as't should be. Let me see the County. / Ay, marry, go, I say, and fetch him hither" (4.2.27-9). Not only are their social and economic advantages to the coming marriage, there are political advantages as well. As a relative (albeit a distant one by marriage), Capulet is now aligned with the ruling power structure of Verona. Montague is going to lose the feud because he did not have a daughter to marry to the Prince of Verona's relative. Capulet appears to be giddy in planning his daughter's wedding feast. He tells his wife:

I'll not to bed tonight. Let me alone.
I'll play the housewife for this once. -What ho! —
They are all forth. Well, I will walk myself
To County Paris, to prepare up him
Against tomorrow. My heart is wondrous light,
Since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed. (4.2.41-6)

His reaction to finding his daughter dead on her wedding day reveals Capulet's authentic emotions for his daughter: she was a commodity to be bargained for advantage in the feud. When he hears the commotion in Juliet's chamber he says "For shame, bring Juliet forth. Her lord is come." There are two complementary meanings of his declaration of arrival: first, her

lord (father) has arrived to escort her to her wedding and second, her lord (husband) has arrived to make her his bride. Juliet is a commodity that is being conveyed from one patriarchal lord to another. When he learns of Juliet's death, Capulet demands:

Ha! Let me see her. Out, alas! She's cold.

Her blood is settled, and her joints are stiff;

Life and these lips have long been separated.

Death lies on her like an untimely frost

Upon the sweetest flower of all the field. (4.5.25-9)

He mourns not the death of his daughter, but that "Death, that hath ta'en her hence to make me wail, / Ties up my tongue and will not let me speak" (4.5.31-2). When he tells Paris of Juliet's death, he uses language that disparages Juliet's chastity and diminishes her suitability to be the County's wife. Capulet declares that on "the night before thy wedding day / Hath Death lain with thy wife" (4.5.35-6). Since Juliet cuckolded Paris by being "deflowered" by Death, "Death is my son-in-law; Death is my heir." Since Juliet has married Death, Capulet "will leave him all" (4.5.35-40). Death is responsible for murdering "our solemnity" and he laments the death of his "soul and not my child!" And although Juliet is dead, more importantly, Capulet's "joys are buried" (4.5.61-2, 63).

In the last scene of the play, Capulet learns of the feigned death of his daughter, the scheme to marry Romeo, the poison trick, and the death of Juliet. When he learns the full tale of the Friar's plots and stratagems, he asks for Montague's hand as the only jointure that he will demand for his daughter. Montague counters with an offer of jointure of a statue of pure gold

“true and faithful Juliet.” Capulet’s dowry will be a golden statue “As rich shall Romeo’s by his lady’s lie; / Poor sacrifices of our enmity

!” (5.3.303-4) However, the dowry and jointure for their dead children memorialize the extinction of their family names.

The Merchant of Venice and “the will of a dead father” (1.2.19)

Shakespeare reveals little about Portia’s father during *The Merchant of Venice*. Belmont is only mentioned in one passage when Nerissa reminds Portia that

Your father was ever virtuous, and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly but one who you shall rightly love. (1.2.21-5)

Despite Portia’s complaint that she “may neither choose who I would nor refuse who I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curbed by the will of a dead father,” the intricate mechanism of the Dowry lottery reveals the love that the “dead father” has for his “living daughter” (1.2.17-19). Portia’s father designed the Dowry Lottery, composed the riddles on the outside of the caskets, selected the emblems found in the caskets, and composed the scrolls found inside the caskets. Belmont’s design choices in the Lottery reveal “a wise father that knows his own child” (2.2.57). Belmont, the estate, is Portia’s sanctuary. Where “Venice is the site of legalism and mercantilism, Belmont is the scene of romance and reconciliation” (Blanchard 217). Where Venice is a patriarchal space where men dominate the social and economic structures that support the city’s mercantilism, Belmont is the feminized space of resolution where love “is pursued and mercy, rather than justice, orders the day” (Lee 5). Belmont also represents the

dowry that Bassanio wins when he chooses the correct casket. Belmont is the “absent presence” for Portia and Bassanio (Maddrell 503).² Her father is in a sense reborn when Bassanio marries Portia; she remains the Lady of Belmont; he is transformed into the Lord of Belmont, an avatar of her dead father.

Portia’s father built safeguards into the Dowry Lottery to insure it yielded a husband that would allow Portia subjectivity within their marriage. There are three explicitly stated rules that must be sworn to before the prospective bridegroom can play the Dowry Lottery. He must “never to unfold to anyone / Which casket ‘twas I chose,” if he does fail “never in my life / To woo a maid in way of marriage,” and the unsuccessful player must “Immediately to leave” (2.9.10-13, 16). Commanding the secret of a participant’s selection prevents collusion. Two or more prospective contestants could not conspire to win the Lottery by sharing information and then dividing the profits with the unsuccessful members of the cabal. Not being able to reveal the choice also prevents any prospective bridegroom from revealing how the Lottery ceremony is arranged and how the selection ceremony is conducted. The setting of the Lottery is meant to emphasize the importance and magnitude of the participant’s upcoming effort and increase the stress each suitor feels. Coming into the room where the caskets are revealed for the first time forces each contestant to become acclimatized to a new and potentially disorienting environment. Each participant must physically and psychologically adjust himself to the Lottery room as he begins the selection process.

While the first rule is neither onerous nor difficult to adhere to, the second presents the prospective participant with the most challenging and potentially burdensome feature of the Lottery. Underscoring its importance, it is the only rule stated twice. Portia tells the Prince of

Morocco “if you choose wrong / Never to speak to lady afterward / In way of marriage” (2.1.40-42). In a society sustained by male progeny and that transfers its real wealth through primogeniture, this prohibition would dissuade any halfhearted attempts to win Portia’s dowry. The third rule requires a failed candidate to leave immediately. This prevents a loser from conveying his choice either intentionally or inadvertently. Further, this requirement stops a suitor from attempting to entice or threaten Portia to change the outcome. In addition, a hasty exit adds to the air of mystery that surrounds the Lottery. A suitor seemingly disappears into the air after losing. If a man desires to play the Lottery, an oath is pledged before witnesses in the “temple.” The religious implications of the setting and the formality inherent in swearing in a church highlight the importance of the oath and the consequences of breaking any of the three rules.

Just as there are three explicit rules that must be obeyed, there are three implicit rules that add to the stress of trying to win the Dowry Lottery. The first is that Portia directs the Lottery selection ceremony. Before the Prince of Morocco makes his selection, she orders a servant to “draw aside the curtains and discover / The several caskets to this noble prince” (2.7.1-2). Before the player makes his choice, Portia reminds each man of the rules that he must obey as condition for playing the Lottery. She tells the Prince of Aragon that if he fails that “without more speech, my lord, / You must be gone from hence immediately” (2.9.7-8). Portia reminds Bassanio that should he choose wrong then “I lose your company” (3.2.3). She signals the prospective bridegroom when he may make his selection. She tells Morocco that first he must “forward to the temple” to swear his “oath” and “After dinner / Your hazard shall be made” (2.1.44-5). After failing to persuade Bassanio to delay his selection, Portia tells him “Away,

then! I am locked in one of them / If you do love me, you will find me out” (3.2.40-1). Portia has custody of the keys that unlock each of the caskets. The choice is made in public. The witnesses include Portia, Nerissa, members of the Belmont household, and the attendants and servants of the prospective Lottery player. Should a candidate select the correct casket, the “nuptial rites be solemnized” immediately, adding additional pressure on the player.

Belmont’s success in protecting Portia and insuring her happiness is evident at the end of the play. Using the majestic plural, Portia commands “Let us go in; / And charge us there upon inter’gatories, / And we will answer all things faithfully” (5.1.295-7).

“My own flesh and blood to rebel!” (*The Merchant of Venice* 3.1.26)

Shylock’s cry of despair captures his sense of betrayal when he learns that his daughter has stolen his ducats and his jewels and activates the identify crisis that he suffers from this point to the end of the play. His crisis is framed by the dowry that Jessica steals in Act 2, scene 6, to elope with Lorenzo and the additional dowry that he is forced to surrender to Jessica and Lorenzo as part of his punishment for attempting to murder Antonio in Act 4, scene 1.

Shakespeare emphasizes Shylock’s identity at the beginning of the play as a Jew, moneylender, and father. Shylock’s primary identity is that he is a Jew. Jessica, Antonio, Bassanio, Portia, and other characters call him “Jew.” Shylock appears to follow *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary laws, that, among other restrictions, prohibits the eating of pork. When Bassanio asks him to dinner, he refuses: “Yes, to smell pork, to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into” (1.3.25-6). Shylock names two connections to the Jewish community in Shakespeare’s Venice; he calls Tubal (“a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe”) and Chus “his countrymen.” As part of his Jewishness, Shylock seeks to separate himself from Christian

Venice. After Bassanio invites him to dinner, Shylock demurs informing him that “I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you . . . but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you” (1.3.26-8). Later Shylock accepts Bassanio’s invitation to dinner; as he prepares to leave, he tells Jessica not “To gaze on Christian fools with varnished faces” (2.5.32).

Another important facet of Shylock’s identity is his role as a moneylender. Although he is described as the devil “in the likeness of a Jew,” a “misbeliever,” “a cutthroat dog,” a “harsh Jew,” and a “damned execrable dog,” by the Venetian Christians throughout the play, he serves the business community of Venice and their need for money. While he is reviled, he is also necessary to the operation of Venetian commerce. Even Antonio, who “lends out money gratis and brings down / The rate of usance here with us in Venice,” is willing to “break a custom” borrows money at interest from Shylock (1.3.34-5, 54).

As a father, Shylock attempts to control Jessica’s interaction with Christians by keeping her confined to their home. He orders her “Lock up my doors, and when you hear the drum / And the vile squealing of the wry-necked fife, / Clamber not you up to the casements then, / Nor thrust your head into the public street” (2.5.28-31). Even after learning of Jessica’s theft and flight, he proclaims that she is “my flesh and my blood” and initially refuses to believe that she has betrayed him.

Shylock’s discovery of Jessica’s theft, flight, and marriage to the Christian Lorenzo begins the process that destroys his identities. She has stolen “A sealèd bag, two sealèd bags of ducats, / Of double ducats, stol’n from me by my daughter! / And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones” to finance her marriage to Lorenzo (2.8.18-20). Jessica’s apostasy means she will be “damned” at death and separated from their Jewishness. The depth of his loss and the

psychological impact that it has on him are realized when he cries “My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!” (2.8.15) Not only has Jessica eloped “with a Christian,” but the theft has transformed Shylock’s money into “Christian ducats!” undermining his identity as a moneylender and as a father. In the world of the play, Shylock’s usefulness as a moneylender to Christian Venice allows him some form of acceptance; it allows him to provide for his daughter and to prosper as a merchant in a hostile environment that has marginalized him as the Jewish Other.

His anger turns to Antonio who he identifies as a representative of the dominant Venetian Christian ideology that has marginalized him, degraded him, stolen his daughter, and his money: yet, that ironically still has use for him. The only avenue that Shylock can pursue for relief and to recover his identity is to demand the payment of his forfeited bond. Shylock initially believes that he can obtain justice from the Duke of Venice and the civil court. He has been participating in the business world of Venice with some success and has used the legal system of bonds and laws to his advantage. Shylock’s sees the insistence on his bond as the only realistic way of revenging himself on Antonio and by extension Lorenzo. He understands that Antonio’s bond forfeiture trial is only a part of the litigation for repayment of loaned money. In his letter to Bassanio, Antonio reveals “my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit; and since in paying it, it is impossible I should live” (3.2.313-15). However, Shylock is unprepared for Balthasar-Portia’s exacting interpretation of the bond and the final assault on his identity as a Jew, a money-lender, and as a father.

Shylock’s insistence on the literal interpretation of the bond with Antonio elicits a punitive reaction from Balthasar-Portia as the representative of Venice’s Christian patriarchy.

When he cannot obtain the forfeiture because it would kill Antonio and thus condemn himself to death, Balthasar-Portia refuses the return of the principal. Since Shylock is “an alien” and has by “direct. . . attempts” sought the life of Antonio, a Venetian citizen, he is subject to a fine of “one half his goods” payable to Antonio and “the other half / Comes to the privy coffers of the state / And the offender’s life lies in the mercy / Of the Duke only” (4.1.144-45, 148-51). The Duke transfers the right of judgment to Antonio who revenges himself on Shylock by quitting “the fine of one half of his goods” and using the other half “Upon his death, unto the gentleman / That lately stole his daughter.” Further, failing to show the mercy that Shylock was implored to grant to him, Antonio demands “that he presently become a Christian” and that “he do record a gift / Here in the court of all he dies possessed / Unto his son Lucentio and his daughter” (4.1.379-80, 382-5). The enormity of Shylock’s loss of identities is captured by his last words in the play:

I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;

I am not well. Send the deed after me,

And I will sign it. (4.1.390-2)

“Well, well, thou hast a careful father, child” (*Romeo and Juliet* 3.5.107)

Not only is dowry appropriated by the women in the three plays under consideration as the beginning of their quests for subjectivity after marriage, Shakespeare uses dowry to reveal the authentic relationships between daughters and fathers. This increases the audiences’ appreciation of the challenges that the women experience in their quests and it allows Shakespeare a way to add consequential depth of characterization to the fathers as well as the daughters in the three plays. As the above discussion reveals, the father/daughter relationships play a vital role in the success or failure of the quests for subjectivity.

Katharina's quest is shaped by Baptista's favoritism towards Bianca. Once she appears to demonstrate obedience to her husband, Baptista rewards Petruchio an addition to her dowry of another 20,000 crowns. Bianca's quest is influenced by her status as the favorite daughter. This allows her to meet and marry Lucentio. At the end of the play, Katharina assumes the role of the chaste, silent, and obedient daughter abandoned by Bianca. Ironically, this means that both of their quests are successful.

The authentic personality of Lord Capulet reveals a father who is emotionally and physically distant from his daughter. Once Tybalt has been killed, Capulet's desperation to marry Juliet to the County Paris creates an untenable situation for his daughter. When Juliet learns of her impending marriage to the County, she embarks on a desperate adventure to remain married to Romeo, retain control of her body, and remain chaste within marriage.

The Dowry Lottery designed by Belmont to protect Portia contrasts sharply with Shylock's solution to safeguard Jessica. Belmont's love for Portia is continually on display. Because he knows that an attractive and wealthy young woman is going to be beset with suitors, he is proactive in his protection of his daughter. His Lottery guarantees that the best husband is selected for Portia. Conversely, Shylock does not seem to accept the possibility that Jessica will marry and certainly not to a Christian. He tries to protect his daughter by isolating her from the outside world. As the events of the play reveal, his approach fails. Shylock's reaction to his daughter's betrayal and theft lead him to seek to punish Antonio, whom he sees as the prototypical representative of the Christian patriarchy of Venice. This, in turn, causes him to be punished with the loss of his wealth, the payment of an additional dowry to the Christian Lorenzo and the newly Christian Jessica, and his own forced conversion to Christianity.

These women are Shakespeare's daughters. It is their quests for subjectivity that allow him to demonstrate the patriarchy as an oppressive ideology that objectifies and commodifies women. However, their quests also reveal that it is possible to resist patriarchal oppression in a way that does not appear to dislocate patriarchal authority and simultaneously allows them to remain subjects after marriage.

Appendix A: Notes

Chapter 1: "She is herself a dowry"

1. Marriage portion was "the common term in legal documents for a dowry or gift on marriage made to the husband" (Sokol, *Language* 264). Shakespeare substitutes "portion" for "dowry" in *1 Henry VI*, *King Lear*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

2. By contrast, Shakespeare uses the term "jointure" only 5 times in 5 plays.

3. All *Henry V*, *King John*, *1 Henry VI*, *King Henry VI, Part 2*, and *King Lear* quotations are from Folger Shakespeare Library. *Shakespeare's Plays* from Folger Digital Texts. Ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 22 July, 2016.

4. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure* quotations are from Folger Shakespeare Library. *Shakespeare's Plays* from Folger Digital Texts. Ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 22 July, 2016.

5. Each quest for subjectivity is a process composed of stages of opportunity that are presented to the women during the course of the plays. In *Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, a stage is an event or incident occurring within the narrative arc of the play that allow the women to advance their quests for subjectivity after marriage. These stages are individualized for each play and distinctive to each female character.

6. All *Taming of the Shrew* quotations come from *Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. Francis E. Dolan. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 1996. Print.

7. All *Romeo and Juliet* quotations come from *Romeo and Juliet: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. Dymphna Callaghan. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2003. Print.
8. All *Merchant of Venice* quotations come from *The Merchant of Venice: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. M. Lyndsay Kaplan. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin, 2002. Print.
9. For an overview of the changes made to marriage in Shakespeare's time, see Christine Peters "Gender, Sacrament and Ritual: The Making and Meaning of Marriage in Late Medieval and Early Modern England." Marriage changed from the "Catholic ideal of marriage as a 'holy sacrament' to a Reformation view of marriage as 'primarily a civil contract'" (76).
10. Bianca appears to be the exception; however, in her role as the good daughter, Baptista assumes that her submissive language and obedient behavior mean that he does not need to monitor or restrict her movements. He relies on the patriarchal assumption of obedience to monitor his youngest daughter's physical movements.
11. In "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," Belsey explains that "meaning depends not on the referent, not on intention, but only on the relations of differences between one term and another within the language." Language resolves itself into sites of "distinct discourses (or knowledges)" such as Ovidian, Petrarchan and Affective. Meaning originates from and is "dependent on the relations of differences between terms" (170-1).
12. *OED* defines "cart" (as the verb) definition 2 as "To carry in a cart through the streets, by way of punishment or public exposure (esp. as the punishment of a bawd)."

13. The *OED Online* defines “itch” as “have an irritating desire or uneasy craving provoking to action. Often in phr. one's fingers itch (to do something, orig. to give a person a thrashing).”

Chapter 2: “The Anger of My Heart”

1. Handfasting is a form of spousal or civil marriage by mutual agreement of the couple to be married. Handfasts were valid whether performed before witnesses or in private. There are two types of handfast recognized by English canon and civil law, “whose effects were determined by the tense employed. A vow made in words of the present tense (*sponsalia per verba de praesenti*) constituted an agreement to enter into the married state immediately. A vow in words of the future tense (*sponsalia per verba de futuro*) was merely a promise to marry at some future time. A *de praesenti* spousal created the status of virtual matrimony at that moment, without future action on the part of the persons concerned. It could even be upheld in courts against a later, consummated contract” (Ranald 71).

2. Mythologizing objectification is a masculine rhetorical gesture used throughout the play. Lucentio refers to Bianca as dear as “Anna to the Queen of Carthage was” (1.1.146). Petruchio informs Hortensio that since “wealth is the burden of my wooing dance,” if Katharina be “as foul as was Florentius’ love” or as “old as Sibyl” or “as curst and shrewd” as Xanthippe, he will marry her (1.2.63-66).

3. According to the B.J. and Mary Sokol in *Shakespeare, Law, and Marriage*, Blackstone provides the “classic definition of coverture: By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing,

protection, and *cover*, she performs everything; and is therefore called in our law-french a *feme-covert*" (118).

4. Karen Newman in *Essaying Shakespeare* notes that Katharina's "sexual puns make explicit to the audience not so much her secret preoccupation but what is implicit in Petruchio's wooing: that marriage is a sexual exchange in which women are exploited for their use-value as producers" (43).

5. As Dolan asserts, "refraining from violence, husbands such a Petruchio can distinguish themselves from 'the common sort of men' as gentle, in the sense of being both nonviolent and wellborn (Dolan-15-16).

6. Lynda Boose, in "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," adds that "As Shakespeare's audience knows, Petruchio has indeed promised Baptista that he will settle on his wife an apparently substantial jointure of land. And while Kate offers to place her hands below her husband's foot rather than kiss it, the stage action seems clearly enough to allude to a ritual that probably had a number of national and local variants." (183)

7. As Dolan suggests "Kate may suggest that she will be obedient when his will is decent and virtuous, not that his will is always so" (*Taming* 138).

8. Sharon Hamilton notes that this is "the same bawdy allusion to the female sex organ ('shift bush') that Celia makes in *As You Like It* (108).

Chapter 3: "Prodigious birth of love"

1. Patricia Hill Collins' concept of "intersectionality" developed in her book *Black*

Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment asserts that “Intersectionality refers to particular forms of intersecting oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or of sexuality and nation” (18). The intersections form a “matrix of domination” that “draws attention to the inherent complexity of privilege as it operates in social systems and shapes people's lives. The basic idea is that various forms of privilege—such as those based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—do not exist independently of one another in the social world or people's experience of themselves. Instead, various forms of privilege are related to one another in ways that make it difficult, if not impossible, to understand one without paying attention to its connection to the others” (Johnson 485). Synchronicity of objectifications shows how the power of individual patriarchal structures work independently and in combination to create an environment that reinforces and intensifies the objectification and subjugation of women.

2. “The ‘exhortation, concerning good order and obedience, to rulers and Magistrates,’ known popularly as the ‘homily on obedience’” is one of “twelve sermons to be read aloud in all English churches on every Sunday and Holy Day” (Kinney 48).

3. Shakespeare expresses similar sentiments in the concluding couplets in Sonnet 1 (“Pity the world, or else this glutton be -- / To eat the world’s due, by the grave and thee”) and Sonnet 4 (“Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee, / Which usèd lives th’executor to be”).

4. “*Earth* includes property and land” (Callaghan 49).

5. Winfried Schleiner quoting Rodrigo a Castro, the author of *De universa morbis mulierum* dedicated to women’s diseases states that “Castro calls the disease *virgineus morbus* (virgin's disease), *febris alba* (white fever) or *amatoria febris* (lover's fever).” “The physiological

reasons, according to him, are simple: the young body fails to evacuate the bad blood because the blood vessels are yet too narrow (*angustia vasorum*)” (665).

Chapter 4: “A lady richly left” (1.1.160)

1. According to *Chambers Dictionary of Literary Characters*, Portia also “shows her love for Brutus in her passionate desire to share his troubles, and suffers a self-inflicted wound to demonstrate her constancy. Faced with defeat, like her husband she sees no alternative to suicide, and swallows hot coals.” Shakespeare’s audience would understand the allusion to the “Roman matron” and construct their initial impression of the character of Portia from this allusion.

2. In M. Lindsay Kaplan’s Bedford/St. Martin’s edition, David Bevington glosses “complexion” as “natural disposition, as at 2.7.79” (67). Definition 3 in *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “complexion” as “Constitution or habit of mind, disposition, temperament; ‘nature’.” Shakespeare uses the term in this sense in *Much Ado about Nothing* when Beatrice describes Count Claudio as possessing “something of that jealous complexion” (2.1.289).

3. Morocco reinforces Portia’s commodification as representing great wealth to the Lottery winner. He says, “They have in England / A coin that bears the figure of an angel / Stamped in gold, but that’s insculped upon” (2.2.55-7). Bevington glosses “coin” as “i.e., the gold coin known as the *angel*, which bore the device of the archangel Michael treading on the dragon” (60).

4. The golden locks here can be interpreted as false symbols of beauty and the “snaky” adjective refers to Medusa. This refers back to Bassanio’s golden locks comment when describing Portia: “her sunny locks / Hang on her temples like a golden fleece” (1.1.168-9).

5. The Sokols explain in *Shakespeare's Legal Language* that “pre-contract” technically “is a misnomer for a contract of marriage” (289). This type of marriage is consistent with the “views of Peter Lombard and the Parisian school, in which merely *verba di praesenti* formed a valid marriage” (Sokol, *Law* 17).

6. See Karen Newman’s “Portia’s Ring: Unruly Women and Structures of Exchange.” Among these metaphors, her “ring is a visual sign of her vow of love and submission to Bassanio; it is a representation of Portia's acceptance of Elizabethan marriage which was characterized by women's subjection, their loss of legal rights, and their status as goods or chattel. It signifies her place in a rigidly defined hierarchy of male power and privilege; and her declaration of love at first seems to exemplify her acquiescence to woman's place in such a system” (25).

7. The Sokols note “In Shakespeare’s plays the legal meaning of a ‘bond’ as an obligation sometimes links with the emotional concept of ‘bonds’.” See also sonnets “87, 117, 134 and 142 a ‘bond’ appears among metaphors of debt and monetary repayment, colouring the concerns of love” (Sokol, *Language* 38).

8. Justice is iconographically depicted as a blindfolded woman holding scales in one hand and a sword in the other. According to de Ville, “Her most well-known forebears in mythology are the Egyptian goddess Ma’at and the Greek goddesses Themis and Dike. The Romans referred to her as Justitia, as she remains known today, or alternatively, as (Lady) Justice” (325). Her blindfold represents impartiality in the dispensing of justice and the sword signifies the punishment she can administer. Balthasar-Portia assumes a feminized representation of Justice

while performing a male role as a “a wise young judge” and “an upright judge”; however, I argue that she is not an impartial judge, but an advocate for Antonio.

9. Antonio’s declaration that Bassanio is responsible for his current peril is part of his effort to reinforce their friendship bond even after his death. Similar to Portia’s pronouncement “Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear,” it is accurate as an estimation of his young friend’s essential character (3.3.311).

10. This is another example of Portia disguising her real meaning with self-deprecating language. At the beginning of Act 3, scene 4, Lorenzo praises Portia for possessing “a noble and true conceit / Of godlike amity” (2-3). She responds that “I never did repent for doing good” (3.4.10). The long speech that follows (lines 11-35) appears to suggest that she is going to assume the role of obedient wife who is waiting anxiously for her husband’s return; the reality is that she is setting the stage for her participation in Antonio’s bond forfeiture trial.

11. OED defines “notwithstanding” as “in spite of.” With one word, Portia hints that she is aware of Antonio’s responsibility for her husband’s surrender of her ring.

12. Brett D. Hirsch notes: “It is imperative that Jessica is distanced from her father, both theologically and racially, since it increases her chances of becoming integrated into the dominant Christian society through conversion and marriage” (126).

13. Michael Ferber notes that “The willow tree, commonly found near rivers . . . seems by its very shape to suggest mournfulness. Its appearance in the well-known Psalm 137 may be due simply to its presence by rivers, but the theme of the psalm let it mournful associations: ‘By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof ‘(1.2)’ (234). In early modern England willows

symbolized “chastity and the fate of a maiden dying without a lover or children. Spenser names ‘The Willow, worne of forlorne Paramours’ (*FQ* 1.1.9). So the report of Ophelia’s drowning in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* 4.7.165-82) begins with a willow, and Desdemona sings of a willow before she is murdered by Othello (4.3.40-56)” (Ferber 235).

14. According to Ovid’s version of the myth Jason implores Medea to save his dying father “by supernaturally transferring a portion of his own vitality to his father, thereby extending his life” (Ovid, 1993, Bk. VII). Medea “instead killed Aeson and drained his blood, subsequently reviving him with the use of a secret potion. This magical intervention not only staved off Aeson’s demise, but erased forty years of aging, returning to him his former youthful energy and beautiful countenance” (Bahun, Burnett, and Main 70).

15. This refers back to Lorenzo’s statement to Gratiano: “Beshrew me but I love her heartily” (2.6.53). In this context, it is glossed as “a mischief on” and identified as “a mild oath” (Kaplan 57). There is the association of a woman as a “shrew” i.e. “A person, *esp.* (now only) a woman given to railing or scolding or other perverse or malignant behaviour; freq. a scolding or turbulent wife” (*OED*). While contextually this may seem to be a “mild oath,” he uses the term to inscribe his wife as disobedient.

16. The music of the spheres is “related to the heavenly or ‘celestial music’” created by the “motion of the stars” which “has a supernatural quality resembling the signing of angels: the divine nature of the harmony produced by the movements of the spheres means that it cannot be heard by mortals” (Wilson and Calore 19, 285).

17. According to Wilson and Calore, the “notion of angels singing on the spheres is one which developed during the Middle Ages – a Christianizing of classical notions” (19).

18. Bevington's gloss of the phrase, "spirits are attentive," on p. 110 is instructive: "(The spirits would be in motion within the body in merriment, whereas in sadness they would be drawn to the heart and, as it were, busy listening.)"

Chapter 5 "it is a wise father that knows his own child"

1. Shakespeare is using "dower" for "jointure" here. A jointure is the additional wealth that the prospective bridegroom is willing to provide in addition to the widow's dower of one-third of the real property at the husband's death.

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