

Lear's Daughters, Adaptation, and the Calculation of Worth

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Abstract

By rewriting *King Lear* in 1987, the Women's Theatre Group (WTG) challenged the ideology of the New Right in Britain, which was characterized by an appeal to an allegedly idyllic past and the promotion of free market economics, individualism, and patriarchialism. The WTG contested the dominant political climate of the 1980s by being committed to feminist theater and composing collectively *Lear's Daughters*, a prequel to Shakespeare's tragedy. Valuing feminist collaboration like that done by the WTG is key to understanding the play, the WTG, and the concept of adaptation, in particular its relationship to the prequel. As it illustrates the characteristics of adaptation, the WTG's prequel opposes two conservative measures of worth: fidelity criticism, which values source over adaptation, and the commodification of women and their creative endeavors being championed by the New Right in the 1980s. Through an unflattering portrayal of Shakespeare's monarch, *Lear's Daughters* exposes the devastating consequences of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's calculation of human worth. Ultimately, in both form and content *Lear's Daughters* objects to Thatcherism and illustrates the difficulty women and artists experienced when attempting to escape this ideology.

Counting and calculating are at the heart of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1607). Repeatedly asking, "How much?" and "How many?" the seventeenth-century tragedy illustrates how human worth can be quantified. As Gloucester and Kent discuss the division of land in the play's opening scene, they speculate on whether Albany or Cornwall will receive the larger portion of Lear's realm based on the amount of fondness the monarch has shown the men (*King Lear*, 1.1.1-6).¹ Not long after this conversation, Lear announces that he has "divided / In three our kingdom" (1.1.35-36) and then asks his daughters, "Which of you shall we say doth love us most, / That we our largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge?" (1.1.49-51). This question sets the play on its precipitous downhill trajectory and, like the opening dialogue, suggests that affection can be parceled out like so much land. In response to their father's inquiry, Goneril and Regan wax hyperbolic about their infinite love for him. Cordelia, on the other hand, defines the precise amount

and kind of affection each party owes the other (1.1.91-92, 93-101). Unhappy with Cordelia's response, Lear recalculates her worth. Concluding that her "price is fallen" (1.1.194), the monarch divides Cordelia's promised land between her elder sisters, leaving his youngest daughter with "nothing" (243).

In the following act, Lear again quantifies his daughters' love, this time according to the number of followers each woman will allow him to retain in his retirement. Angry that Goneril limits him to fifty knights, Lear turns to Regan, whom he believes will permit him to keep all of his one hundred men. His middle daughter, however, corrects him, saying that even "fifty followers" is too many; "but five and twenty" will be permitted in her house (2.2.402, 413). Lear responds by siding once again with his eldest daughter because by promising fifty followers, he reasons, Goneril is "twice [Regan's] love" (2.2.426). But neither woman is interested in housing Lear's men. "What need you five and twenty, ten, or five . . . What need one?" (2.2.427-29), they ask rhetorically, leaving Lear, much like his youngest daughter, with nothing.

Lear's Daughters (1987), a prequel to Shakespeare's tragedy, confronts *King Lear's* preoccupation with numbers and the calculation of human worth. The play's authors, Elaine Feinstein and the Women's Theatre Group (WTG), explore this theme in order to critique the right-wing policies of then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's support of patriarchal values, reliance on free market economics, and emphasis on individualism are held up for scrutiny in *Lear's Daughters*, as can be seen in the play's preoccupation with numbers. This interest in counting is apparent at the beginning when the Fool (figure 1) counts the "six parts" the "four actors" will play and remarks on the "One stage, One audience, One castle, [and] One prop" involved in the production (Feinstein 2000, 217). The cast members then join together to repeat the numbers "One, Two, Three, One, Two, Three, One, Two, Three" in a game of blindman's bluff (Feinstein 2000, 217). Reversing this numerical progression, the Fool holds up her fingers in order to count the characters in the play:

(holds up three fingers)

Three princesses.

(holds up two fingers)

Two servants.

(holds up one finger)

One king offstage.

(holds up one finger on other hand)

One queen dead. (Feinstein 2000, 217)

After reconsidering, the Fool summarizes the situation differently. Doing the "*same finger business*," she proposes that the play features

Three daughters,
Two mothers,
One father,
and the Fool. (Feinstein 2000, 217)

The significance of the pairs on these lists, such as "One queen" / "the Fool" and "Two servants" / "Two mothers," is explained later in the play. From this early point, though, it is apparent that there is always just "One king," "One father." Lear is presented as standing on his own; the countdown ("Three . . . Two . . . One") always leads to him. *Lear's Daughters*, however, challenges the monarch's centrality by never bringing him on stage and by exposing the consequences of the kind of counting and calculating upon which Lear's — and, more broadly speaking, the patriarchy's — system of social relations is built. The WTG is critical of number One, the patriarch who entraps his wife, daughters, and female employees in a corrupt economy in which he assesses their value.

The WTG's critique of Shakespeare's monarch can best be understood by acknowledging that in the 1980s Britain was being encouraged to embrace "a new public philosophy . . . rooted in the open affirmation of 'free market values' — the market as the measure of everything — and reactionary 'Victorian' social values — patriarchalism, racism, and imperialist nostalgia" (Hall and Jacques 1983, 11). By rewriting *King Lear*, the WTG challenged the ideology of the New Right, which, as epitomized by Thatcher, was characterized by an appeal to an allegedly idyllic past² and the promotion of free market economics, individualism, and patriarchalism. In order to illustrate this claim and to examine the nature of adaptation, Part I of this essay explains how the WTG challenged the dominant political climate of the 1980s by being committed to feminist theater and by composing collectively *Lear's Daughters*. Valuing such feminist collaboration is key to understanding the play, the WTG, and, as Part II reveals, the concept of adaptation, in particular its relationship to the prequel. The second section of this essay proposes that embracing the dispersal of authority, as the WTG did in composing *Lear's Daughters*, and rejecting linearity, as the play itself does, opens up a space in which to discuss the nature of adaptation free from the constraints of fidelity criticism, which ranks sources as superior and prior to adaptations.³ Fidelity criticism is not the only conservative measure of worth challenged by the WTG, however. In *Lear's Daughters*, they also object to the commodification of women and their creative endeavors in the 1980s. As Part III explains, through an unflattering portrayal of Shakespeare's monarch, *Lear's Daughters* exposes the devastating consequences of Thatcher's calculation of human worth. Ultimately, in

both form and content the play objects to Thatcherism and illustrates the difficulties that women and artists experienced when attempting to escape this ideology.

I. Multiplicities: Authority and Adaptations

From its beginnings in the 1970s, the British theater collective that would come to be known as the Women's Theatre Group challenged contemporary ideas about the role of women in theater and the role of theater in politics. In 1973, a group of artists — ranging from those who had little commitment to feminism but were upset at the dearth of opportunities for women in the theater to feminist street performers and feminists who looked to the stage as a political platform — joined together to perform in the Women's Theatre Festival. This occasion marked "the first time feminism and theatre had confronted each other directly [. . .] [N]ew questions inevitably arose about the relationship between politics and art, and the position of women within the theatre industry itself" (Wandor 1981, 49). The issues addressed during this groundbreaking season would continue to influence the group, particularly in the year following the Festival, when the collective split in two, with some members calling themselves The Women's Company and others joining together under the title The Women's Theatre Group. As Michelene Wandor argues, the former company did not cohere because they lacked a common political vision (Wandor 1981, 49-50). In the case of the WTG, however, a fervent commitment to feminism was in large part responsible for their success beginning in 1974 and continuing to the present day. Now called The Sphinx Theatre Company, the ensemble remains committed to the politics that were at the center of the group nearly forty years ago. Their mission, as they report in 2012, is to "offer strong roles for actresses . . . give women directors the opportunity to work on projects they are passionate about . . . [and maintain] a strong track record of convening conferences about women in the arts" (Sphinx Theatre Company 2011). The continuing need for this kind of work is clear: although women comprise 52% of the population, only 35% of actors, 23% of directors, and 17% of writers are female (Sphinx Theatre Company 2011).

In 1987 the WTG called attention to numbers of a slightly different kind in service of a similar political agenda with their play *Lear's Daughters*. Although at one point in its history the play was billed as being written solely by Elaine Feinstein, this fantasy of singular authorship does not match the reality of the creation of *Lear's Daughters*. When composing the prequel, the artists favored partnership over individuality and put into practice what they stated was a defining feature of the WTG. "Our group," they announced in a press release, "[. . .] has always functioned in a totally collective manner, trying to avoid leadership and hierarchies" (quoted in Wandor 1981, 51).⁴ Though initially Feinstein wrote the playscript herself, when she presented the text to the group the

WTG was dissatisfied with it. As a result, the women revised the play collectively during a series of workshops. Critics' responses to this collaborative authorship were not positive; many found it unsettling not to be able to identify a single individual as the creator of the play. The reviewers' "underlying discomfort" was the result of the absence of an "identifiable 'subject' (or individual) to be criticized in relation to the 'object' which is the play" (Goodman 1993a, 99). Despite the pressure put upon them, however, the WTG's members remained committed to collaborative authorship, refusing to come forward individually to admit to having any unique hand in the play. Only after "lengthy discussion with the group" did it become clear that Janys Chambers was responsible for the final editing of *Lear's Daughters* (Goodman 1993a, 97-98).⁵

The WTG's reluctance to identify a single person responsible for the play and its commitment to feminism set the group in opposition to the dominant ideology of contemporary Britain. In the 1970s and '80s, the nation was warned about socialism's ever present threat to the Free World and taught that in the Cold War era, gender politics were a non-issue. Because of her unique role as a successful female world leader, Margaret Thatcher might have been expected to have aligned herself with feminist politics. She preferred, instead, to move "between various incarnations of femininity, depending on the current political advantage" (Hadley and Ho 2010, 5). The first, and to this point only, female Prime Minister of Britain, Thatcher sometimes called attention to gender in order to secure the public's support — for example, by reminding them that her experience as a housewife and the daughter of a grocer meant that she appreciated the need to live within a budget. At other times, however, Thatcher ignored or rejected the significance of gender politics, such as when she asserted that "she owed nothing to women's lib" (Hadley and Ho 2010, 4). Thatcher's ambivalence about gender is evident not only across her career, as Louisa Hadley and Elizabeth Ho suggest, but within speeches she delivered during the Cold War era. Ambivalence in these speeches is not neutral or apolitical, but rather results in a picture of Thatcher as decidedly anti-feminist. In communiqués delivered in the mid-seventies, for example, Thatcher raises the issue of gender only in order to disparage it as a petty concern in light of the build-up of socialist forces the world over. Examining excerpts from these speeches allows us to appreciate the political issues to which the WTG was responding, in particular the relationship, as Thatcher saw it, between individualism and gender.

In a speech to the Conservative Party in 1975, Thatcher initially appears to address head-on the issue of gender expectations: while being introduced at the convention, she cleans the podium with a feather duster that is color-coordinated to match her suit, much to the delight of the crowd. Contrasting with this performance of a housewife's duties was, generally speaking, Thatcher's

public role in politics and more specifically this speech, which championed individualism over collectivity in a way that ostensibly nullified Thatcher's own professional achievements outside the domestic sphere. First contrasting Socialists, whom she claimed would have people "be numbers in a state computer," to Conservatives, who "believe [people] should be individuals," Thatcher congratulates her party for its conviction that "every human being is equally important." Less inclusively, though, she then explains that the Free World hinges upon masculine individualism: "A *man's* right to work as *he* will, to spend what *he* earns, to own property, to have the state as servant and not as master: they are the essence of a free economy, and on that freedom, all our other freedoms depend" (Thatcher 1975c, emphasis added). Underscoring her commitment to a model of government that would reject collectivity at all costs, Thatcher's remarks, including her choice of the noun "man" over "person," have the unfortunate effect of undoing the cheeky joke she had set up earlier with the feather duster, one that might have provoked a meaningful discussion of gender expectations in both public and private life (Thatcher 1975b).⁶

The following year, in response to having been labeled by the Soviets at the *Red Star* newspaper as "The Iron Lady," Thatcher delivered another speech in which she initially called attention to gender, but only in order to pit it against the threat of socialism. By pointing to the incongruity between her performance of femininity and the masculine titles with which she had been labeled, Thatcher seems to be priming her audience for an illustration of the idea that gender is a social construct. She pretends to wonder how a lady donning a "Red Star chiffon evening gown, [her] face softly made up, and [her] fair hair gently waved" could possibly be "the Iron Lady of the Western World, a Cold War warrior, [and] an Amazon philistine" (see Thatcher 2010).⁷ Once the laughter from the crowd dies down, however, Thatcher abruptly switches course, now accepting these titles, though not in service of feminism. The Prime Minister elects not to grapple with the politics of labels such as "The Iron Lady" and "Amazon" or to appropriate these names in a politically astute move, as other groups have asserted agency by redeploying labels foisted upon them.⁸ Rather, she dismisses these titles as the products of short-sighted individuals who do not comprehend the threat that socialism poses to the Free World. "Yes," Thatcher asserts, implying that any reasonable person would agree with her views, "if that's how they wish to interpret my defense of values and freedoms fundamental to our way of life . . . they're welcome to call me what they like."⁹

Thatcher's lack of interest in gender politics,¹⁰ coupled with her anxiety about the Soviets, led her to promote individualism, which she presented to the public as simple common sense, just as she would later do regarding the entire phenomenon of "Thatcherism."¹¹ "There is no

alternative," she famously asserted, thereby naturalizing an ideology that, in reality, was only one story among many.¹² The WTG, on the other hand, encouraged its audiences to imagine alternatives to stories — about socialism, individualism, and gender — that Thatcher's government touted as inevitable. The threat the company posed to Thatcherism explains the distress felt by the critics of *Lear's Daughters* when they could not identify a single author of the play. Ensconced in a culture where fear of socialism appeared to necessitate a negation of feminist concerns and where individualism was championed and socialism vilified, collaboration between politically astute women, not surprisingly, made audiences of the Thatcher era uncomfortable. Together, the WTG and, as I will explain in Part III, its adaptation of *King Lear* challenged Thatcher's politics of individualism, which is best encapsulated in a remark made by the Prime Minister in the same year *Lear's Daughters* was performed: "There is no such thing as society" (Thatcher 1987).¹³

Against this political backdrop, which championed individualism as the defining feature of Western civilization, Shakespeare scholars, much like the WTG, were questioning traditional conceptions of authorship founded on the Romantic notion that the author was a unique genius, separate from and high above his/her culture. In the era when Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan understood combating socialism to be their primary duty as leaders of the Free World, Stephen Orgel, for example, questioned whether authority could be located in a single individual. In 1981, he made the point that "most literature in the [early modern] period, and virtually all theatrical literature, must be seen as basically collaborative in nature" (Orgel 1981, 6). While "Shakespeare might seem to be an exception [to this collaborative theatrical practice], since he was not simply the playwright but also an actor and shareholder," this is not the case. Rather, as Orgel makes clear, "[Shakespeare] was simply in on more parts of the collaboration" (3-4). In 1988, Stephen Greenblatt concurred, arguing in *Shakespearean Negotiations* that "the [early modern] theatre is manifestly the product of *collective* intentions" (Greenblatt 1988, 4, emphasis added).¹⁴

Valuing joint authorship both in the early modern period and the late twentieth century is certainly key to challenging the image of the lone Author and to recognizing the politics of artists' negotiations with their cultures. Acknowledging the significance of collaboration also allows us to understand the nature of adaptation broadly conceived, for *all* adaptations must be said to be authored by many, not by one. Authority is dispersed in adaptations, though Lizbeth Goodman misses this point when she argues that "unlike [in] Shakespeare's original," *King Lear*, "there is no single author for *Lear's Daughters*" (Goodman 2003, 38). That the early modern theater was collaborative calls Goodman's assertion into question, so that when looking for the so-called "source" of *Lear's Daughters*, we are faced with two versions from which to choose:

The History of King Lear (Q1) and *The Tragedy of King Lear* (F). Which *King Lear*, then, are we talking about when we say "Shakespeare's original?" Even if this is splitting hairs and the question can be answered by a conflated version of the play,¹⁵ there remains the fact that we must look further back than Shakespeare's text because it is not the "original" story of an aged father who experienced problems with his three daughters and his land. The tale of King Leir was a part of ancient British history (c.800), recorded by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his twelfth-century *Historia Regum Britanniae* and later retold in various other places, including the *Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), *Albion's England* (1586), *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587), and *The Faerie Queene* (1590). To this list we can add the anonymous play, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1605) and the seventeenth-century lawsuit involving Sir Brian Annesley and his three daughters, two of whom attempted to have their father declared mentally incompetent so that they could possess his estate. Sir Brian's youngest daughter, Cordell, however, sided with her father in order to save him from the nefarious designs of her sisters.

Collectively, these versions of the king's story might be thought of as being sources for *King Lear* and thus for *Lear's Daughters*. Considering Shakespeare's and the WTG's plays in these terms illustrates that they, like all adaptations, are "palimpsestic" (Hutcheon 2006, 9). Gérard Genette's analogy of the hypertext as a palimpsest, in which "on the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through" (Genette 1997, 388-89), describes both *King Lear* and *Lear's Daughters* as plays that contain echoes of past texts and yet simultaneously tell their own stories. Shakespeare's work with living playwrights, actors, and writers as well as his engagement with the dead — an 800-year-old tale and its many tellers — complicate the notion of the "single author" in the case *King Lear*, a play concerned both with Britain's history and its future. The WTG similarly engaged with past authors and present circumstances when they composed their play by working with Shakespeare, his sources, and his reputation in order to create *Lear's Daughters*, "a play which speaks directly to audiences of the Thatcherite years" (Griffin and Aston 1991, 13).

Although both Shakespeare's and the WTG's plays are the palimpsestic results of collaborative authorship, most readers would label *King Lear* as an adaptation. *Lear's Daughters*, on the other hand, would be relegated to the category of the prequel. Linda Hutcheon has argued that, like plagiarisms and fan fiction, "sequels and prequels are not really adaptations [because] . . . there is a difference between never wanting a story to end . . . and wanting to retell the same story over and over in different ways" (Hutcheon 2006, 9). This point is certainly worth making; intuitively, we know that there is something different about the relationship between *King Lear* and *Lear's*

Daughters than the relationship, for example, between Shakespeare's play and Jane Smiley's 1991 novel *A Thousand Acres*. Hutcheon's dismissal of prequels and sequels, however, is ultimately "unnecessarily confining" (Fortier 2007, 5). Her classificatory strategy precludes the kind of "openness" that Mark Fortier advocates, which in this case would allow for an acknowledgment of the qualities that prequels and sequels share with adaptations (Fortier 2007, 1). A more fruitful way of characterizing the relationship between adaptations and prequels/sequels is to imagine the latter as being a particular type of the former. Prequels and sequels stretch a narrative's boundaries and so are somewhat different from adaptations, which remain within a source's narrative frame. However, prequels and sequels simultaneously illustrate key characteristics of adaptations: namely, (1) the phenomenon of ghosting; (2) the role and nature of repetition; (3) the political position the adapter takes when creating an adaptation; and (4) the disruption of a linear relationship between source(s) and adaptation. Looking closely at these characteristics reveals that the relationship between adaptations and prequel/sequels is more inclusive than Hutcheon proposes and illustrates how this unique textual mode allowed the WTG to critique Thatcherism.

II. Shaking the Family Tree of Adaptation

In order to appreciate the relationship between adaptations and prequels/sequels, it is useful to consider Marvin Carlson's concept of "ghosting," which "presents the identical thing" that audience members "have encountered before, although now in a somewhat different context" (Carlson 2001, 7). In *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, Carlson contends that this experience is especially pertinent to the theater and can manifest itself through actors' previous roles or personal lives, materials used in productions, the playing space, and the stories told on stage. Though he does not theorize about adaptation *per se*, Carlson discusses how narratives such as myths, folktales, and histories have been "recycled" in the theater. Like narratives, characters are also commonly reused on stage, as Carlson explains:

In the case of recycled characters the audience is expected to bring to its experience not a knowledge so much of such a specific narrative line but, rather, of the character traits of one or more familiar figures, who continue to demonstrate those already known traits within changing situations. When [. . .] a group of recycled characters appear together in a variety of narratives, not only individual traits may be repeated but also ongoing relationships. What results is a much looser kind of narrative recycling. (44-45)

This description of character recycling is fitting to prequels and sequels because in them we see familiar characters in unfamiliar situations. In *Lear's Daughters*, for example, knowing audiences¹⁶

are familiar with Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia from Shakespeare's play. However, the time period in which the play is set is unfamiliar to them. Viewers see Lear's daughters as younger girls rather than as the women they are at the beginning of *King Lear*. If character recycling like that done in *Lear's Daughters* is "a much looser kind of narrative recycling," then narrative recycling is the broad category, and character recycling is a subset of it. A similar relationship exists between adaptations and prequels/sequels: adaptation could be considered to be the larger category, with prequels/sequels being a type of adaptation. As such, although they are distinguishable, as Hutcheon contends, adaptations, prequels, and sequels share key characteristics, including ghosting and its corollary, repetition.

Ghosting occurs because of repetition; the audience's perception of a play is affected because a narrative or character is reused. As Carlson suggests in his description of narrative recycling, however, ghosting relies not only on sameness, but also on difference (Carlson 2001, 27). This paradox — repetition with a difference — is central to adaptations, prequels, and sequels and is especially apparent in the recycling of Shakespeare's plays. These adaptations remind us of a moment in history when repetition was thought of differently than we tend to think of it today. Consider, for instance, early modern writers Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey's poems compared to Francesco Petrarch's and to each other's, or Sir Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare's sonnets in relation to their predecessors' verses. These poems demonstrate that while imitation was important to their work, early modern writers did far more than repeat mindlessly an earlier style. The same can be said of Shakespeare's drama, which borrowed from many texts but did not replicate without adding to, critiquing, or otherwise reworking them. The notion of repetition without a difference is short-sighted, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri have explained: "Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature. The crocodile does not reproduce a tree trunk, any more than the chameleon reproduces the colors of its surroundings" (Deleuze and Guatarri 1987, 11). Similar to animals who adapt to their environments but never become identical to them, adaptations such as *Lear's Daughters* involves "repetition but without replication" (Hutcheon 2006, 173).¹⁷

Lear's Daughters repeats *King Lear* with a difference by preserving the play's main characters and simultaneously pushing its narrative boundaries back to the years before Shakespeare's play begins. To remind audiences that repetition is not always replication, *Lear's Daughters* juxtaposes sameness and difference in Scene 2 when the daughters' births are described by the Nurse. Initially, it seems that the events are identical. There is a strange natural occurrence during each of the births, and the children are all linked symbolically to royalty. When Goneril is born, the Nurse reports, "a

comet rushed through the sky, leaving a red tail in the black," and the Queen's crown, which falls off her head during labor, encircles the newborn (Feinstein 2000, 218). As Regan is delivered, a volcano erupts. Her mother sits on her throne to give birth to the baby, who is described by the Nurse as looking like "a ruby dropped out onto the velvet plush" (218). Rather than announcing Cordelia's story aloud as she had done with Goneril and Regan, the Nurse whispers to the youngest about her birth, which leads the older girls to harangue Cordelia until she reveals the details of her origin. Like with the others, there was an odd occurrence in nature when she was born, and so when Regan hears about the hurricane, she prematurely concludes "It's the same, it's the same" as hers and Goneril's beginnings (219). Cordelia, though, contradicts Regan by revealing that, unlike at her sisters' births, when she came into the world, "Lear was there" (219). As Goneril and Regan's disappointment upon hearing about this difference suggests, Lear's presence is evidence that the monarch's third daughter is more precious to him than his other two. But, though "the infant daughters compensat[e] for their father's neglect by deifying his memory" (Saunders 1999, 405), the play makes it clear that being the king's favorite is not all it is cracked up to be.

Indeed, the relationship between parents and children in *Lear's Daughters* (and in *King Lear*) is fraught, to say the least. As a mode, adaptation — including prequels and sequels — is similarly pressured by the filial relationship it is presumed to have with its source text.¹⁸ When the "source" or "original" is identified as the parent text, it occupies the dominant, authoritative position. The adaptation is left to be the perennial child, a subordinate who is permanently undeveloped and saddled with a secondary status. By its very nature, however, adaptation resists the family tree;¹⁹ rather, like the rhizome, it is "antigenealogy" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 21) because

it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb "to be," but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, "and . . . and . . . and." This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb "to be" . . . [K]now[ing] how to move between things [means] . . . to overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 25)

Adaptations defy "filiation" and fidelity criticism, which depend upon chronological order and an implicit hierarchy between the parent/original and the child/adaptation. They "overthrow ontology" by holding both before and after at once in the present moment. Adaptations simultaneously look to the past and the present — and, in the case of sequels, to the future — and embody multiplicity, i.e., the "and . . . and . . . and" that Deleuze and Guattari champion. Author Jane Smiley has intimated as much in her description of the experience of writing *A Thousand Acres*. Composing the novel

was as if, she said, there were "two mirrors facing each other in the present moment, reflecting infinitely backward into the past and infinitely forward into the future" (Smiley 1996, 56).

In order to understand Smiley's mirror analogy and the kind of time-travel that adaptations encourage, it is useful to consider how history was represented on the early modern stage. As with adaptations, at that point in the theater's history the lines separating distinct moments in time were often blurred in performance, and audiences were aware of this fact. Henry Peacham's sketch of *Titus Andronicus* (figure 3) offers a good example of the anachronistic nature of the early modern theater, for in it "two modes coexist: the Elizabethan soldiers attend their Roman general on a stage where past and present confront each other as, perhaps, at no other time in history" (Rackin 1990, 1-2). The texts of early modern plays were similarly illustrative of the situation suggested by Peacham's drawing. Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, for instance, presents its audience with a "temporal bricolage" (Walsh 2006, 339). Dekker's play "juxtaposes the fifteenth-century city of Simon Eyre and the late sixteenth-century city of the Rose Theatre, producing a jarring historicity . . . The play is infused with other anachronisms, from its mention of tobacco and firearms to its references to sixteenth-century stage plays" (339, 340). Although as Phyllis Rackin has explained, a sensitivity to distinguishing between moments in time was developing in the period, while historiographic texts attempted to avoid anachronism, dramatic texts and performances were less concerned with eliminating it (Rackin 1990, 95). Not insistent on separating now from then, early modern audiences routinely held two or more moments in time in their minds at once.²⁰ They were often aware of this fact because stage anachronisms had the ability to "produce a kind of alienation effect" (Rackin 1990, 94).

Adaptations work in a similar way, as they never let knowing audiences forget that they are looking simultaneously backward to the "original(s)" and forward to the adaptation. Prequels and sequels, in particular, emphasize adaptations' disruption of linearity as they push at a narrative's boundaries, forcing audiences to confront before or after alongside now and then. As a result, adaptations, prequels, and sequels are best thought of as being affiliated or as forming an "alliance" with Shakespeare's texts, many of which are themselves adaptations.²¹ Thinking of a rhizomatic rather than a filial model transforms the vertical relationship between texts into a horizontal relationship and frees adaptations from the limitations of linearity. Viewed in this way, texts have a relational rather than a hierarchical connection and as such, they work together collectively rather than competitively.

The WTG's *Lear's Daughters* illustrates these qualities of adaptation. The play has rightly been called a reaction against "a genealogy of 'false fathers'" (Goodman 1993b, 220),

including Shakespeare, his play, and its main character. Not only does the content of *Lear's Daughters* bear this out, as I will discuss in Part III, but so does the play's inherent challenge to linearity. *Lear's Daughters* shakes the family tree of adaptation by moving simultaneously in two directions, thereby resisting a hierarchical relationship with its predecessor. The play disrupts the linearity expected of adaptations, which, as common sense would have it, maintains that the adaptation can only ever exist belatedly, in the wake of the "original." Written in 1987, *Lear's Daughters* does, of course, succeed *King Lear*, but, as a prequel placing itself prior to the beginning Shakespeare's play, it simultaneously precedes the seventeenth-century tragedy. Looking back in time and positing how Lear's familial and political situation came to be, the WTG deconstructs the past as it does the present. Implicitly asking, "What came before Shakespeare?" *Lear's Daughters* demands acknowledgment of the many earlier versions of Lear's story and so questions the alleged singularity of authorship.

As it looks back to a time before Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the WTG's play simultaneously speaks to late twentieth-century concerns. *Lear's Daughters* "argues with a government that prohibits 'pretended' families and that uses Shakespeare as one of its tools by which to maintain and promote its own regressive political views" (Bennett 1996, 53). Written just prior to the enactment of Section 28, which suppressed public discussion of homosexuality in Britain,²² *Lear's Daughters* confronts its cultural moment. Fearing that an alternative family model would usurp one founded on patriarchal privilege, the New Right sought to silence opposition to the status quo in the late 1980s. By revealing the shortcomings of the traditional familial structure, and, as discussed above, by working collectively and bringing gender politics to the fore, the WTG challenged the dominant ideology of their era.

III. "How much?": Women, Art, and Commodification

As the WTG critiques *King Lear* by exposing the alleged naturalness and benevolence of the patriarchy as the construction of a corrupt government, they simultaneously indict Margaret Thatcher for calculating the worth of women and artists in the 1980s. Motivating the company's opposition to Thatcher was the fact that under the Prime Minister, "the idea (current since 1945) that the arts provided an indispensable national forum — in which current views of the world could be questioned or contested and through which new views could be disseminated — was rejected as the self-serving justification of a subsidised left-wing elite" (Davies and Sinfield 2000, 141). Thatcher greatly reduced funding for the arts and forced artists to rely on market forces rather than on government subsidies. Thus, artists were pressured to seek corporate sponsorship and to produce art that reinforced rather than challenged societal norms (141-42).

The WTG, however, refused to comply. Instead, they confronted the issue of artists being compelled to go to market by linking this situation to women's experience in the economy of gender in *Lear's Daughters*. In the opening scene of the play, the Fool tells the audience a knock-knock joke that primes them for the calculating of worth that is to follow:

Knock, Knock.

Who's there?

Godfrey.

Godfrey who?

Godfrey tickets for the play tonight. (Feinstein 2000, 217)

Pitting herself against the audience, since they have presumably paid while she has apparently gotten in for free, the Fool reminds viewers that they have counted their money and handed it over in exchange for a show. This initial joke addresses the monetary value placed on art and harkens back to the WTG's earliest days when, as the members note, they endured the "difficulties of functioning without any subsidy whatsoever" (quoted in Wandor 1981, 51). Choosing to begin *Lear's Daughters* with the Fool's routine encourages audience members to think about the value they place on art and to consider the price paid by groups like the WTG who, when denied adequate funding, were compelled to create plays such as *Lear's Daughters* out of nothing.

The Fool's jest is only the beginning of her association with money. Throughout *Lear's Daughters*, as she holds out her hand to receive compensation for her services, the Fool calls attention to the intersection between artists and women in a culture where both have become goods to be sold on the market. In a poignant moment near the end of the play, the Fool reports on her attempts to make Lear laugh by telling him jokes that involve counting. Her first jest begins with the question, "How many kisses does it take to keep a king happy?" "103," she explains: "One to kiss his tears away. One to kiss his fevered brow. One to kiss him deep in passion and 100 to kiss his arse!" (Feinstein 2000, 232) Unsurprisingly, Lear hits the Fool in the face because her counting makes him the butt of the joke. When the Fool tries another jest that involves numbers, however, the king very much enjoys himself. "A man goes up to a woman in the street," begins the Fool. "'How much?'" he says. She is outraged. "What do you think I am?" and the man says, "We know what you are, love, we're just discussing the price." Lear is tickled by this joke: "The King laughs — and laughs. He laughs as though he would burst" (Feinstein 2000, 232). The monarch's reaction is fitting since for him all women, not just prostitutes, have a price that indicates their worth. Unlike the man in the joke, however, for the king there is no negotiation over fees, only the fact that women can be equated with money and men set the price. As a reward for this joke,

the Fool is paid by Lear in a curious way: "Taking the Fool's ear he twists it to open its mouth. He places a coin on the edge of its tongue and the Fool (mimes swallowing coin, gulps)" (232). By ingesting the money, the Fool makes the point that for the starving female artist, biting the hand that feeds you is not a viable option. Furthermore, women and money are inseparable in a world where Lear calculates women's worth. The Fool's treatment here makes explicit what is examined elsewhere in the play: women's worth, which is located in their bodies, is created and calculated by men, and thus the females in *Lear's Daughters* are always, already trapped.

Further underscoring the connection between women, their art, and the monetary value placed on them by the patriarchy, the king's daughters introduce themselves by describing the materials with which they create: Goneril paints, Regan carves wood, and Cordelia works with words. The daughters' art, however, is devalued in Lear's kingdom. We hear no more about it until the end of the play, when Regan says that she "used to carve with my knife, create beauty from distortion" until she realized the extent to which she and Goneril were at the mercy of their father. Her carving will continue in Shakespeare's play, as we know, though it will be in the service of playing "a new game which will not be beautiful" (Feinstein 2000, 232). In the final moments of *Lear's Daughters*, Cordelia also remarks on her art when she explains the verbal self-censorship she must observe in order to remain of value to her father. As apparent in his interactions with the Fool, Lear will fund art that pleases him; and, as Shakespeare's play confirms, he will deny financial support to performances that do not. This point that women's creativity is limited by patriarchal whim speaks to the WTG's critique both of the scant financial support they received in their early days and the limited opportunities for women in theater in the 1980s. "[I]n a theatre industry dominated by revivals of Shakespeare's plays," as Goodman has explained, "to work in well-funded theatre [in the 1980s], female actors too often found themselves in the wings, waiting for their moment to walk on and deliver their few lines" (Goodman 2003, 39). Though women's ability to be creative was curtailed by a Shakespeare-dominated industry, the WTG's play "turned that dynamic on its head" by never bringing Lear onstage and instead focusing on the women in his life (39). That Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia harbor artistic tendencies connects their plight to the WTG's situation as it brings into view another kind of creative activity associated with women and similarly regulated by the patriarchy: the production of children.

In Scene 10, the Fool explicitly connects children, money, and women when she announces that this is the part of the play where the "Fool talks about investment" (Feinstein 2000, 227). She then places a coin down the front of her skirt and says, "Nest egg, pension, taken care of, rainy day, looked after, old age" and rubs her belly (227). The connection between children and money is solidified when a moment later, the Fool pulls a doll from under her skirt as though she has birthed

it and announces, "Investment." Although investing in the future as one might do with a retirement fund is similar to having children since both might provide for a person in his/her old age, Lear's financial plan unfortunately requires that someone else pay his dividends. The Fool explains who loses in this economic system when she says, "Three princesses all grown older, thinking about their father and counting the cost" (227). The cost of what becomes apparent as the scene unfolds: Goneril must keep track of women's value for her father; Cordelia is made to spin around in order to entertain Lear until she falls dizzy on the floor; and Regan uncovers the truth of her mother's death — three miscarriages that were the result of the king's demand for a son.

As the women in the play suffer in this economic system, the WTG speaks volumes, "offer[ing] a materialist discourse, a critique of capitalism" (Griffin and Aston 1991, 13). The company achieves this goal by examining the consequences of living with and, in the cases of the Fool and the Nurse, working for Lear. The hired women reinforce the point that for Lear all women have a value, and, as with feminist theory of the 1980s,²³ "the theme of economic valuing of women's work is brought to the fore" in the play with their presence (Goodman, 2003, 41). When the Nurse first joins the household, the Fool explains that there are "Three daughters. With two mothers — one buying, one selling. One paying, one paid" (Feinstein 2000, 219). The repetition of two mother-figures in the play is significant, as is the difference between them. Lear's wife pays bodily for her service to the king. Dying after complications from pregnancies that were forced upon her by Lear, the Queen is valued by her husband solely in terms of her body's potential to produce a male heir. "[T]he dead queen's job of mothering is [then] hired out to the Nurse" (Goodman 2003, 41). Discarded when her "services are no longer required [. . .] Just like the Queen when she didn't make the right sort of boy-child for him," the Nurse too is trapped in an economy where, we soon discover, he who sets the prices is inept with numbers (Feinstein 2000, 231).

Although Lear ultimately determines that the Queen is disposable and exchangeable for other women, as the Nurse explains to Regan, "She *was* important to [Lear]. She organized the budget. Looked after his interests. Night after night when he wasn't with her, adding and subtracting to balance the figures" (Feinstein 2000, 228). The Queen must assume the role of the accountant because, ironically, Lear has no head for numbers. "He is very distressed by reading documents like these," she says, referring to the ledgers in which the accounts are kept. Because of Lear's poor financial planning, "the budget is in chaos. Taxes aren't being paid, and there's no income from the fields" (219). Lear, who cannot handle figures and "so by and large he doesn't read" the account books, is not adept at managing his estate (219). Thus, the females in his life are compelled to keep track of the worth of land, taxes, and even their own bodies. Lear owns the land and the bodies, and

though women have an insider's perspective on the king's system, the play illustrates how difficult it is to escape such a corrupt economy.

This difficulty is made apparent during Goneril's trip to the cellar with Lear, which is ominous not only because of the implication of incest, but because the sexual act is coupled with money. As she looks on the "crowns, coins, breastplates, gold bars, all glowing in the candlelight," Goneril is told by Lear, "When you are Queen, this will be yours." He then instructs her that for now, "This will be our secret — just you and me — and you mustn't tell." "And then," Goneril adds, "he put his hand (*silence*) on my shoulder" (Feinstein 2000, 228). The implication here is that Lear may have transferred his carnal desires from his wife to his daughter as he refers to the young girl as "Queen" and lays a hand on her. But whether or not he sexually abuses Goneril, Lear certainly compels his daughter to take on her mother's role when, like the Queen before her, she is put in charge of the accounts. Goneril tells the Nurse, "He came in last night and pushed [a ledger] at me. 'Your mother used to do this so you can now. It's the accounts.' Columns and columns of figures" (229).

Although the king insists that Goneril replace his wife, once she is in charge of the finances Lear's eldest becomes more like her father than her mother, soon understanding the world in terms of numbers. Her ability to calculate women's worth in men's terms is apparent when Regan attempts to engage her sister in conversation about their impending marriages. Instead of addressing Regan's concerns, Goneril focuses on reading the ledger and responds laconically to her sister. Goneril's lack of interest in her marriage is apparent; unlike her sister, the romantic, she is pragmatic. The eldest understands that "It's our jobs. It's what we're here for. To marry and breed." She then informs her sister that Lear's daughters are "valuable merchandise" to be sold at their father's will (Feinstein 2000, 229). Regan's sudden announcement that in seven months she will have a baby momentarily shocks Goneril. The eldest cannot believe that her sister "could . . . be so stupid." Regan protests: she is not stupid, but rather like the rat in the Fool's earlier joke, she is stuck in the middle. "I've always been number two, between one and three, but nothing," she complains (229). Now, since she has created a child of her own, Regan believes that she will have something special. Goneril explodes her sister's dream by explaining to Regan the consequences of her pregnancy. Showing her sister the amount she is worth with and without an illegitimate child, Goneril underscores the relationships among women, creativity, and money in the play. Though Regan is reluctant to look at the account book, Goneril is forceful, compelling her sister to see that the ledgers

say Regan, Second Daughter of Lear, is worth this much, and . . . [t]hese figures say My Lord Duke of Cornwall owns this much. These figures say Regan will marry Cornwall and then Cornwall will own more and Lear will get a grandson, a legitimate heir and they will all be contented men. However, Regan, Second Daughter of Lear, with bastard child, is

worth this much! (GONERIL rips out page from ledger, crumbles it and throws it on the floor . . .) Get rid of it! (229-30)

In this system where women's "value-invested form amounts to what man inscribes in and on its matter; that is, her body" (Irigaray 1985, 187), there is no room for Regan's romantic notions of love. Whether she "lie[s] in bed at night . . . feel[ing] [her] heart beating so fast" when she thinks of marriage, the reality is that she is a commodity, and as it stands, she is damaged goods (Feinstein 2000, 229). In this scene, Regan illustrates Gayle Rubin's explanation of the way that cultural norms regarding sexuality are acquired: "Each new generation must learn and become its sexual destiny, each person must be encoded with its appropriate status within the system" (Rubin 1997, 42). Under the tutelage of Goneril, Regan learns that she is no longer a virgin who is "pure exchange value" (Irigaray 1985, 186), nor does she occupy the other acceptable position in Lear's economy, the mother. "Mothers are essential to [the social order's] (re)production," of course, but "[t]heir responsibility is to maintain the social order without intervening so as to change it" (185). In not conforming to heteronormative expectations for reproducing within an approved marital relationship, Regan challenges her status as a commodity, and as a result, her worth diminishes.

As Goneril's lesson to her sister illustrates, women in *Lear's Daughters* are like numbers in the ledger, always on the verge of adding up to nothing. Once Regan understands the dire consequences of performing an independent creative act, she seeks to restore her worth as a "gift," for neither she nor her sister can imagine a world in which "'commodities' refused to go to 'market'" (Irigaray 1985, 196). Lear's middle daughter thus undergoes a painful abortion, which reminds us that women's creative (re)production, free of the rules of the market, is not permitted in a world where "men exchange women [and thus] it is men who are the beneficiaries of the product of such exchanges" (Rubin 1997, 37). Regan recognizes the importance of her interaction with Goneril and reinforces the link between women's art and reproductive capability when, at the end of the play, she contrasts her former artistic "energy and creativity" with what occurs at this moment: "And then 'Get rid of it,' she said, 'Get rid of it,' and that was all. The veil was pulled away from my eyes," Regan explains, "and I could see what [Lear] had done to [Goneril], had done to me" (Feinstein 2000, 232).

IV. Conclusion

In telling the story behind *King Lear*, the WTG provokes the audience to look afresh at the aged king for whom many readers of Shakespeare's play feel pity. As Shakespeare shows us, Lear's system of calculating women's worth costs him his sanity, his kingdom, his relationship

with his family, and, ultimately, his life. His daughters, who lose their creativity, agency, and humanity, also pay a heavy price. As the WTG questions the patriarch at the center of Shakespeare's play and is committed to collaborative authorship and feminist politics, the company critiques Margaret Thatcher's privileging of the market and the individual in late twentieth-century Britain. Collectivity/multiplicity, the WTG argues, is positive and productive; individuality/singularity is destructive and limiting. This insight is provocative not only for what it can tell us about *King Lear* and contemporary British politics, but also for what it reveals about the relationship between adaptations, prequels, and sequels and their so-called "sources." *Lear's Daughters* illustrates that adaptations inherently challenge a linear model in which the parent text determines the adaptation's worth as the play reassesses the value of adaptations, prequels, artists' collaborative efforts, women's work, and women's bodies.

By calling our attention to numbers and the manner in which women and their creations are valued, *Lear's Daughters* ultimately advocates for a world "without additions and accumulations, one plus one, woman after woman . . . Without sequence or number. Without yardstick or standard . . . exempt from masculine transactions: enjoyment without a fee, well-being without pain, pleasure without possession" (Irigaray 1985, 197). Achieving this, the WTG argues, begins with rejecting an economy like Thatcher's that calculates artists' and women's worth, as the Nurse does at the end of *Lear's Daughters*. When she opens the letter terminating her as an employee of the household once the two eldest daughters have married, the Nurse finds money inside the envelope. She refuses, however, to accept this, her final payment. "Money he gives me. Pieces of silver. What do I want with his gold?" she remarks in disgust (Feinstein 2000, 232). Refusing to participate any longer in a market where her worth is determined by a political leader, the Nurse leaves, offering the money instead to another of Lear's employees. "Here, Fool. Grovel for it, Fool, for that I shall never do!" the Nurse says scornfully as she tosses the coins at the monarch's entertainer and leaves Lear's castle on her own terms (232). The final image of *Lear's Daughters* harkens back to these lines and to the beginning of the play while making the point that artists and women are placed in a difficult position when their worth is dependent upon their going to market: the Fool turns to the audience and "*Holds out[her] hand for money*" just before the lights go to black (232).²⁴

Notes

1. All references to *King Lear* are to the Conflated Text in *The Norton Shakespeare*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt et al. (Shakespeare 1997).
2. See Sinfield (1989), 4.

3. In this section and throughout this essay I use the term "adaptation" to describe *Lear's Daughters* primarily because my analysis builds on and critiques Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation*, which uses this term exclusively. And as Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier acknowledge, though the label "adaptation" is not perfect, it has advantages over other, similar, terms. Most relevant to this essay is Fischlin and Fortier's point that "[a]daptation implies a process rather than a beginning of an end." Furthermore, adaptation "is the word in most common usage and therefore capable of minimizing confusion" (Fischlin and Fortier 2000, 3). Though Fischlin and Fortier reject "appropriation," a term commonly used to describe texts such as *Lear's Daughters*, it could be used to classify the WTG's play. See (Desmet 1999, 4) and (Marsden 1991, 1) for definitions of this term.
4. The assertions of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987) regarding authorship could be said to be those of the WTG. The authors reported that they wished "[t]o reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I." Furthermore, to them, Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration meant that "[w]e are no longer ourselves [. . .] We have been aided, inspired, multiplied [. . .] A book is an assemblage [. . .] and as such is unattributable. It is a multiplicity" (3-4).
5. As Goodman explains, the collaborative nature of the play made its authorship difficult to pin down, as can be evidenced by the variety of ways in which the authors were presented to the public (98-99). The original script of the play announced them as follows:

Lear's Daughters
by The Women's Theatre Group and Elaine Feinstein
copyright 1988 The Women's Theatre Group and Elaine Feinstein

The first advertisements, however, presented the authors differently:

Lear's Daughters
by Elaine Feinstein
Women's Theatre Group

Finally, the handbills and programs for the play appeared thus:

Lear's Daughters
by Women's Theatre Group

6. For the full text of this speech, see Thatcher 1975c.

7. For the full text of this speech, see Thatcher 1976.
8. Consider, for example, "Reclaiming Cunt" in Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (Ensler 2008, 101-102) or the use of the term "slut" in the "Slut Walks" that recently took place across North America in response to a Toronto police officer's advice to women that they "avoid dressing like sluts" in order to reduce the chances of being sexually assaulted (Stampler 2011).
9. The blending of masculinity and femininity in the person of Margaret Thatcher has preoccupied critics and was satirized in the 1980s by the Spitting Image puppet of the Prime Minister, which was often shown dressed in a man's suit and smoking a cigar: See Hadley and Ho (2010) for a discussion of Thatcher's "contradictory blending of male and female attributes" as represented by the puppet (5). In the same volume, see Kim Duff's essay "Let's Dance: The Line of Beauty and the Revenant Figure of Thatcher" for further analysis of the puppet, which underscored the fact that Thatcher was "masculine and feminine *at the same time*" (Duff 2010, 181, emphasis in original). To be sure, Thatcher's dual gender stands in contrast to the WTG's Fool who, as Leslie Ferris (2009) has said, "flouts sexual ambiguity" to political ends (106).
10. See also Thatcher's avoidance of the topic at a press conference after winning the Conservative leadership in 1975 (Thatcher 1975a).
11. Hadley and Ho remark that when Thatcher claimed in 2003 that she did not invent "Thatcherism," she was rejecting the notion of her politics being "an ideological approach" in favor of considering it to be "a natural historical development" (Hadley and Ho 2010, 6).
12. See Alan Sinfield's very astute explanation of cultural production, including the significance of this statement made by Thatcher, in *Literature, Politics, and Culture in Postwar Britain* (1989, 23-38).
13. For the text of the entire interview in *Women's Own* (31 October 1987), see Thatcher 1987.
14. Though the influence of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism has been widely felt, it nonetheless continues to be difficult for readers to appreciate the collaborative nature of the early modern theater. Perhaps this is because even as early as 1623, Shakespeare was marketed as a sole creator. "Whether consciously or not, the folio editors placed Shakespeare outside the common and accepted practice of co-authorship in Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline drama," as Brian Vickers has noted. "[Thus, the editors] laid the way for a quasi-bardolatrous belief in Shakespeare as the special case, the Romantic genius who needed no adjutants" (Vickers 2002, 18). Long after the seventeenth century, and despite the declaration that the Author is dead, the desire to cling to the single, identifiable playwright continued. In 2001, Jeffrey Masten complained that though the point about the early modern theater being a collaborative endeavor had been established by Bentley, Orgel, and himself, editors still could not come to terms with

how to deal with multiple authorship. "If the fact that collaboration was the 'dominant mode of textual production' in the early modern theater has been widely recognized now as a thread of theatrical/literary history," Masten writes, "it has largely not altered our editions of the plays thus produced" (Masten 2001, 113).

15. See the *Norton Shakespeare* for its *King Lear: A Conflated Text* (Shakespeare 1997, 2493-567).
16. I borrow the phrase "knowing audience" from Linda Hutcheon, who uses it to identify audiences who are familiar with an adaptation's "source" text.
17. See Hutcheon and Bortolotti (2007) for an extended discussion of the relationship between cultural and biological adaptation.
18. See, for example, Hutcheon (2006), 32.
19. See Ruby Cohn (1976), who argues that adaptations should be conceived of as "offshoots," a term she wrongly judges to be a "neutral word" (Cohn 1976, 3). As she aims to "indicate how far the shoots grow from the Shakespearean stem" (3), Cohn invokes a plant metaphor, which is not dissimilar to the family tree metaphor implied by Hutcheon's use of "offspring." A related but somewhat less hierarchal term, "ancestors," is employed later by Bortolotti and Hutcheon (2007), though it too, I would argue, invokes the problematic image of a family tree.
20. This flexibility regarding the relationship between moments in time may help explain why audience members themselves were so often found appropriating the plays they saw in the theater in their everyday lives, as Charles Whitney has explained (see Whitney 2008).
21. Fortier suggests something similar about one particular adaptation's relationship to other texts: "[Heinrich] Muller's *Hamletmachine* does not descend in a filial genealogy from Shakespeare, but is written in a rhizomatic web of alliances: Artaud, Brecht, Sartre, Franz Fanon, Ulrike, Meinhoff, Conrad" (Fortier 1996, 7). This observation, as I suggest here, can be applied to adaptations more broadly speaking.
22. Section 28 was enacted in 1988 and not revoked until 2003, which, incidentally, was the year immediately following Thatcher's retirement from public life. It reads as follows:

28. (1) The following section shall be inserted after section 2 of the Local Government Act 1986 (prohibition of political publicity) —

2A. — A local authority shall not —

(a) intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality;

(b) promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

23. See, for instance, Hartsock 1983.

24. As I hope this essay illustrates, claiming that a text is composed by a single individual is short-sighted. I would like to extend my gratitude to Jonathan Chambers, Kim Coates, Julie Haught, and Scott Magelssen for their helpful suggestions during the creation of this project.

Permissions

Figure 1. The Fool Counting. Image from The Sphinx Theatre Company website. <http://www.sphinxtheatre.co.uk/> [accessed on 18 November 2012].

Figure 2. Margaret Thatcher Puppet. Image from the Spitting Image Wiki. http://spittingimage.wikia.com/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher [accessed on 18 November 2012].

Figure 3. Henry Peacham's *Titus Andronicus*, c. 1595. Image from The Artchive Virtual Gallery. http://www.artchive.com/web_gallery/H/Henry-Peacham/Illustration-from-Titus-Andronicus,-by-William-Shakespeare.html [accessed 18 November 2012].

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