

Université de Montréal

Shakespeare and the Hermeneutics of Censorship in Renaissance England

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Mémoire présenté en vue de l'obtention du grade de maîtrise en études anglaises option avec

Mémoire

Août 2023

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Ce mémoire intitulé

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RÉSUMÉ

Mon mémoire vise à définir, analyser, contextualiser et historiciser la censure à la Renaissance à travers l'exploration de diverses œuvres de Shakespeare, notamment les pièces souvent désignées sous le nom d'Henriad— *Henry IV partie 1 et 2*, *Richard II*— tout en portant une attention particulière sur *Les Sonnets*. Cette thèse s'intéresse à l'interpénétration des différentes institutions de censure, ainsi qu'aux différentes façons dont la censure peut se manifester ; à l'hétérogénéité des institutions, des divers agents, ainsi que des censeurs ; à la manière dont certains mécanismes se rejoignent, coopèrent ou divergent à d'autres moments. L'objectif principal est de démontrer que la censure va au-delà des paramètres de quelconque institution ou agent individuel, et qu'elle résulte de l'amalgame de chaque partie impliquée volontairement ou involontairement dans la prolifération de mesures répressives. Finalement, mon étude démontre que les pièces et *Les Sonnets* de Shakespeare ont été censurés de différentes manières, et cela, par différentes institutions, mais plus important encore, ce mémoire met en évidence que Shakespeare a mis en avant différents stratagèmes adaptables dans le but de contourner la censure de ses œuvres.

Mots-clés : Shakespeare, Sonnets, théâtre, Richard II, Henry IV, Renaissance, censure, autocensure, censure idéologique, censure sociale

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to define, analyze, contextualize, and historicize censorship in the Renaissance through an exploration of Shakespeare's Sonnets as well as the group of plays often referred to as the Henriad—*1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *Richard II*. The overarching focus of this thesis is to demonstrate the in-betweenness of censorship—the different ways in which censorship is manifested; the institutions as well as the censors; how different censoring mechanisms merge at certain times, cooperate, or even disagree at others. The goal is to bring forth a clear understanding of the genealogical entity of censorship, to prove that censorship is bigger than any one institution, any one individual, that censorship is an amalgamation of every different susceptible censoring party working together mostly, and sometimes not—voluntarily or involuntarily—in their ever-changing ways of repression. Ultimately, my study of Shakespeare demonstrates that the plays and the sonnets were censored in different ways through different institutions, but more importantly, this paper highlights that Shakespeare had different adaptable ways of circumventing the censorship of his works.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Sonnets, theatre, Richard II, Henry IV, Early Modern England, renaissance, censorship, self-censorship, ideological censorship, social censorship

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without the support of friends, colleagues, and family, the completion of this project would never have occurred— I am indebted to you all. A very special thanks to my Bup and my Mum for always believing in me.

INTRODUCTION

Hermeneutical Inconsistencies: The Administration of Censorship in Renaissance England

“This is too insolent, and to be changed.”

— Charles I¹

King Charles I’s remarkable comment cited above is an excellent starting place to begin a discussion of censorship. This comment is a very strong suggestion forwarded to Philip Massinger, in which he was instructed to edit a passage of his play *King and the Subject*. The play was deemed overtly critical of the crown as it referred to issues of forced taxation.² This event is not only important because it constitutes an undeniable, recorded instance of censorship directly linked to the crown; nor because it remains one of the firsts substantiated artifacts of public institutional censorship, wherein the crown voiced its displeasure, not through a proxy, but personally³; nor even because this incident set the very public precedent for what official

I would like to thank Joyce Boro for her criticisms, comments, and suggestions about earlier versions of my argument. I am grateful for her invaluable support and insight throughout the research and writing of my thesis. Any errors that remain are my own.

¹ See Chiari, Sophie. “The Various Levels of Early Modern Censorship.” *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 6.

² All quotations from the Master of the Revels Sir Henry Herbert surrounding this incident, and others, are to Bawcutt’s edition, cited parenthetically within the text and in all subsequent footnotes as (Bawcutt, X). See Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996. And for more ample commentary on the Charles I incident, see, for example, Richard Dutton’s *The Limits of a Censor's Authority: The Case of the Masters of the Revels*; and Annabel Patterson’s *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*, esp. Introduction.

³ Annabel Patterson writes extensively about what I would describe as ‘Schrödinger’s censorship.’ She explores one of the biggest theoretical difficulties in researching censorship in the early modern time, and in the past in general. That is, the more successfully censorship is impressed on its authors and artists, the less evidence of **non-**

institutions can censor and how *publicly* said censoring can take place without fear of repercussions. When the Master of the Revels and the Stationers' Company censored works on behalf of the crown, not only was a degree of cooperation between them and the crown public knowledge, indeed, it was also expected.⁴ However, when King Charles himself read Massinger's *King and the Subject*, and left comments in the margins—his comment “too insolent, and to be changed” became one of the most infamous incidents of censorship of the Renaissance. Very far from being infamous due to its severity, rather, it was an important reminder that the business of licensing, producing, and the staging of plays was not entirely relegated to proxies, and that defiance and insubordination on the part of the playwrights always remained on the King's radar. This matter is also remarkable because it is a part of a series of incidents surrounding the King's censor, sir Henry Herbert, on which the Court of High Commission—the supreme ecclesiastical body in England, led by the archbishop of Canterbury William Laud— was involved in the direct oversight of public theater for the first and only time in its recorded history⁵.

official censorship we have today. See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, esp. 28-29.

⁴ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, esp. pp. 8; Hadfield, Andrew, editor. *Literature and Censorship in Renaissance England*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2001; and Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, esp. introduction.

⁵ See Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 141–57, esp. 152 for the genealogy of the cooperation between the Stationers' Company and the Crown. For commentary on these events, see Richard Dutton's *The Limits of a Censor's Authority: The Case of the Masters of the Revels in Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*, esp. 68. These events are extremely important to consider because they highlight what the modern scholar most understands as “hands on censorship.” This succession of events is also a lesson in the history of censorship because it set the table for a modern study and analysis of the reception of state censorship in the Renaissance.

Charles I's comment when analyzed reveals a theoretical flaw in our understanding of censorship.⁶ As I will discuss, this incident has elicited different interpretations, and thus highlights the ambiguous materiality of censorship and how it ought to be re-historicized and re-understood when examined within different spaces by different scholars. How can a seemingly straightforward incident of censorship, in general, be understood differently by different scholars, and what can we learn from these instances of bifurcations of opinions? The goal here, is above all, to highlight how scholars of different—and sometimes similar— backgrounds and professions, who stress different ideals and preconceptions can have access to the same identical set of unbiased, objective data, and yet arrive at wildly different conclusions. Of course, the objective is not to cast doubts on the legitimacy, nor on the integrity of different claims, rather, the greater ambition of this chapter is to emphasize a procedural difficulty: What can be said about censorship in the Renaissance generally, when opinions about one of the most transparent and supposedly straightforward documented cases of censorship differ? The goal of this thesis is to explore non-legislative modes of censorship as they seem to not have been fully accounted for in most recent studies of the politics and hermeneutics of censorship in early modern England.⁷

⁶ More so than a simple theoretical flaw in our understanding of censorship, this incident illustrates the sheer diversity, amongst literary historians, in defining the word itself. As a result, the scholarship is divided twofold: first on the basis of its early modern conceptualization; and second on the basis of the definition of censorship today.

⁷ Most studies discuss press censorship, and the central stand of these debates is mostly concerned with freedom of expression, while having relatively little to say about non-legislative modes of censorship. See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990; Dutton, Richard. *Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England*. St. Martin's Press, 2000; idem, "Shakespeare and Marlowe: Censorship and Construction." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 23, 1993; idem, *Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama*. University of Iowa Press, 1991; Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 141–57; idem, *Politics, Censorship, and the English Reformation*; Milton, Anthony. "Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, pp. 625–51; A. B. Worden. "Literature and political censorship in early modern England." *Too mighty to be free: censorship in Britain and the Netherlands, Britain and the Netherlands*, Zutphen, De Walburg, 1987. pp. 45-62; Clegg, Cyndia Susan. "Privilege, License, and Authority: The Crown and the Press." *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997; idem, *Press Censorship in Jacobean England*, Cambridge University Press, 2001; Shuger, Debora K. *Civility and Censorship: Censorship and Cultural Sensibility the Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England*. University

Divergences in contemporary responses to King Charles' remark, then, are rooted one way or another in our inability to argue under the same parameters. Indeed, the main procedural difficulty in discussing censorship cases is that those on both sides of the debate—for the most part—tend to focus on direct and legislative forms of censorship to support their respective arguments, while having relatively little to say about non-legislative modes of censorship.⁸ While I do not wish to downplay the ways in which state censorship, church censorship, market censorship, ideological censorship, social censorship, and self-censorship are linked one to another by virtue of their interoperability, I nevertheless believe it important to clarify their differences. To better understand these differences, I propose the metaphor of an onion. I will begin this analysis with a fairly straightforward and uncontroversial claim: the human impulse which promotes self-censorship is inevitably a consequence to external stimuli.⁹ In a totally fictional but plausible scenario where no heads rolled and no ears were slit, a writer in the Renaissance still feared economic sanctions through market-censorship.¹⁰ At which point, the market is unwilling to publish the said work fearing it would anger either the State or the church (State & Church censorship).¹¹ Alternatively, if we are to presume that such a monstrous work

of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2006; Hadfield, Anthony. "The Politics of Early Modern Censorship." *Literature and Censorship in Renaissance England*, ed. Anthony Hadfield, New York, eds. Palgrave, 2001; Fitter, Chris. *Radical Shakespeare: Politics and Stagecraft in the Early Career*. Routledge, 2011; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574-1642*. Edition third, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009; Bonner Miller Cutting "A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England." *Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship*. Oxford UP, 2017.

⁸ Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, 9.

⁹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, pp. 26 for an account of self-censorship; then Drury, Shadia B. *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; and Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books, 1972 for more detailed conceptualizations of censorship.

¹⁰ See Kitch, Aaron. *Political Economy and the States of Literature in Early Modern England*, London, Routledge 2009, pp. 79; Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, esp. introduction; and Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993.

¹¹ See King, John F. "Religious Change in the Mid-Tudor Period." *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion*, eds. Andrew Hiscock and Helen Wilcox, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.

was allowed for a reason or another to be published, again, society would either buy it, or would not (social censorship).¹² The potential boycott of the book could be driven by fears of retribution from the State for potentially possessing heretical writings, or it could even stem from the common individual consciousness being deeply in synch with the political and religious energies of the Renaissance (ideological censorship), and so on. Though a part of the same onion, each layer (mode of censorship) is unique and presents its own sets of distinctions. Legislative modes of censorship are repressive in ways social or self-censorship are not; indeed, the threat of being hung is not equivalent to the threat of losing one's patronage for example. However, there is not in my view a hierarchy of censorship, wherein brutality necessarily equates to more repression. I believe it to be worth exploring these modes of censoring texts and discourses, testing the view that they are inherently almost impossible to quantify and substantiate. This perspective ultimately aims to offer an alternative view of censorship in the Renaissance.

The loaded significance of censorship as a concept, then, has enlarged the scope required for its historization and interpretation, while unfortunately multiplying the proliferation of misinterpretations and the possibilities of scholarly bifurcations.¹³ One such critical debate is seen in Sophie Chiari and Annabel Patterson's different analyses of King Charles' comment on *King and the Subject*. In discussing Charles I's remark "This is too insolent, and to be changed," Chiari emphasizes that "the sovereign always had the last word, of course."¹⁴ Chiari believes a case such as this one to be of the utmost importance to our understanding of the more nuanced

¹² Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 371.

¹³ See Bush, Douglas. *The Renaissance and English Humanism*. University of Toronto Press, 1972, chapter 1, esp. Pages 13-17, for an account as well as a survey of various modern theories of the Renaissance in the humanistic tradition.

¹⁴ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp.6.

forms of censorship in the Renaissance, for if we are to take into account the often-underestimated importance of market-censorship and self-censorship, for example, what would become clear is that many of these supposed isolated instances of censorship, seemingly independent from the state, are in fact an unequivocal result of the crown's pressure, though without directly being attributed to the crown itself.¹⁵ Chiari argues, indeed, that we should no longer understand censorship as an absolute mechanism of subversion, destruction, or control, and that "there was probably no such thing as texts immune from censorship at the time."¹⁶ Annabel Patterson, in direct opposition to Chiari, writes that allowances were continuous throughout the period (and theater's history), and has classified Charles I's same comment as a "puzzling incident of *non censorship* (my emphasis)."¹⁷ Because the play was ultimately licensed, then produced, and because its author—Philip Massinger—emerged from this situation unscathed, "after the most trivial gestures of appeasement," Patterson maintains that the author's infraction had not resulted in a great enough reaction from the crown for Massinger to have been considered censored. The disagreement between Chiari and Patterson, then, is ultimately rooted in their respective interpretations of censorship itself.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, 18-19.

¹⁶ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp.5; Whilst acknowledging "those [monographs] dating from the twentieth century, that chiefly focus on censorship as a means of repression and mutilation emanating from an authoritarian regime," she compiled in her book an impressive collection of essays belonging to prominent scholars of the Renaissance and the early modern period, many of whom wish to redefine and re-historicize censorship, and "demonstrate the complexity of coexisting systems" and to take into account the specific and ever-shifting shapes of censorship. See Chiari's preface and General Introduction in Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018.

¹⁷ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, esp. pp. 13.

¹⁸ On the one hand, the Charles I incident, for Patterson is a great example of the collaboration between the holders of power and the writers. On the other hand, Chiari sees this incident as just another instance where the writer was not presented a real choice and has therefore elected to voluntarily censor himself.

That Charles I read the manuscript of Massinger's *King and the Subject* and swiftly demanded for it to be revised prior to publication, remains amongst literary historians, a significant and irrefutable fact. What scholars cannot agree on, however, is the meaning behind this puzzling incident of censorship (or non-censorship).¹⁹ From Charles I's remarkable yet not so subtle comment, interpretations of it may have turned to confront error in more subtle forms, for if we are to consider and engage in a more modern approach in our views of censorship, we realize, rather quickly, that what concerns the modern literary historian and scholar above all are the complex—and often disputed—hermeneutics of censorship.²⁰ It could be said, then, that censorship retains its force and salience through a succession of serendipitous exchanges between the censors and those censored. And in many instances, the distinction between censors and censored, those in power and those who seek it, becomes as nebulous as the concept we seek to define. Annabel Patterson maintains that a “certain immunity was attached to the highly abstract,”²¹ and that similar sets of conventions “exhibit the equivocal and fragile relationship between writers in the early modern period and the holders of power.”²² The maintenance of this relationship, Patterson continues, was crucial for all writers who aspired to have success and influence. This unavoidable relationship between the censors and the writers ultimately became a

¹⁹ The scholarship surrounding this incident, and censorship as a whole is generally divided into two camps. On the one hand we have the absolute, unassailable notion in which censorship is unforgivably repressive, brutal, and most importantly, ostentatious. These public displays, for example, can take the form of royal decrees, substantiated incidents of imprisonment, mutilations, etc. On the other hand, while other scholars do not ignore the brutally repressive dimensions that censorship can hold, they have nevertheless abandoned the binary conceptualization of censorship in favor of more nuance. For these scholars, censorship can be more than a simple display of brute force where cropped ears, burned books, chopped hands, shattered printing presses, exiles, and imprisoned artists are at the forefront of the discussion. See Fellion, Matthew, and Katherine Inglis. *Censored. A literary History of Subversion & Control*. British Library. 2007 (esp. Introduction).

²⁰ For critical perspectives and for the history of the different accounts and possible conceptualizations of censorship through time, and today, see Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, esp. Preface & Introduction.

²¹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, esp. pp. 10.

²² See Patterson, 8.

dance between the two parties—one in which the delicate balance between censors and censored could be broken at any time by intransigence on either side.²³

Reconceptualizing censorship in the Renaissance, then, is the first of many steps towards developing a more nuanced understanding of the concept. It would be insufficient to study and criticize ways and forms of censorship practiced in the Renaissance based on contemporary hermeneutical understandings; this would reduce any given argument to a presentist fallacy.²⁴ It becomes crucial, then, to re-historicize censorship twofold with the dual purpose of historicizing and understanding censorship in the Renaissance, whilst also trying to carry over its meanings and nuances to our conceptualization of censorship today. Indeed, for if we were to adopt a contemporary hermeneutic of censorship, it would become impossible to make sense of Shakespeare's writings for example, of their reception, and of how they could have impacted or resonated with the ethos of the period.²⁵ Under these same conditions, if we were to engage in a

²³ Aside from the Master of the Revels, whose impact alone anchored censorship as a word in a state of perpetual limbo, wherein censorship becomes impossible to define by virtue of the often paradoxical and contradictory relationship between censors and writers, the lackluster, unorganized strategies for the regulation and the administration of literary criticism maintained by the State casted a veil of uncertainty that loomed over the period. For example, even dramatists themselves, alongside patrons too, appeared to not *publicly* group themselves in opposition of the censors. Indeed, they merely fought over more trivial things as their agenda was mainly focused on who should be censored, to what end, and to what extent. In fact, writing and censorship, in early modern England, appear as two sides of the same coin, where most authors and all authorities were engaged in symbiotic relationships. See Chiari's "*To be Seen and Allowed*": *Early Modern Regulation Practices*, esp. Introduction; and Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, esp. 8-10, for a detailed analysis of the complicit relationship between the State and those censored.

²⁴ Simply put, presentism suggests a non-critical predisposition in favouring present-day attitudes, concepts, theories, definitions, and norms when interpreting past events. This would make it both impossible to understand censorship in the Renaissance, and easy to confront interpretative errors. For several recent studies on the dangers of presentism see Davidson, Matthew. "Presentism and the Non-Present." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 113, no. 1, 2003, pp. 77–92; and Orilia, Francesco. "Moderate Presentism." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 173, no. 3, 2016, pp. 589–607.

²⁵ This point is further compounded by early modern complications and intricacies in how the political body operated. Indeed, how can one transpose any postmodern definition of censorship into the Renaissance and make sense of it, when the most prominent scholars of the early modern period debated the meaning of the words 'censorship', 'liberty', 'censor' and 'critique'? Or when Jonson's writings were censored whilst he was next in line to become a censor himself. These few confusing examples, alongside the many more recorded, and the even more lost to history, make it virtually impossible to understand censorship and its many nuances in the Renaissance

purely early modern conceptualization of censorship in our study of these events, then we would be doing our analysis a great disservice, as we would ultimately be forfeiting the hundreds of years of delicately excavated literary knowledge, progress and evolution in critical thinking made over the centuries since Shakespeare's time.²⁶

Recent analyses of censorship in early modern England examine different incidents, such as Charles I's comment as a cause or effect or both, and as such they combine into a confusing statement about censorship itself, that is, into many connotations that one can blindly accept, forcefully reject, idealistically redefine, or simply contemplate.²⁷ David Cressy presents key episodes of alleged censorship cases in the early modern period specifically, highlighting critical disagreements on important points relating to the theorization of censorship more generally, in an essay wherein he cataloged the ever evolving and lively debates about the politics and hermeneutics of censorship in early modern England.²⁸ If we are to analyze censorship in practice, we must first understand—or at least acknowledge—instances where opinions diverge in theory. Annabelle Patterson maintains that institutional censorship, namely court censorship was the only one that counted.²⁹ She imagines a social mechanism where writers apply a coded system of communication “in which ambiguity becomes a creative and necessary instrument”³⁰

without a lesson in the history of the period. See Burt's Preface in Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, esp. pages 11 through 14.

²⁶ Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, esp. Introduction.

²⁷ For a few more analyses on the subject, see Sheila Lambert. “The Printers and the Government, 1604-1640.” *Aspects of Printing from 1600*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris. Oxford Polytechnic Press, 1987; and Michael Mendie, “De Facto Freedom, De Facto Authority: Press and Parliament, 1640-1643.” *Historical Journal*, pp. 315-325.

²⁸ See Cressy, David. “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 359–74. Cressy's work is an important collection of essays, monographs and opinions belonging to the most prominent scholars of censorship.

²⁹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 29

³⁰ Patterson 18.

that would become known as what she coined “the hermeneutics of censorship.”³¹ Richard Burt argues that censorship pervaded early Stuart theatrical culture and was “practiced and nurtured not only by the court but also by the playwrights, theatrical entrepreneurs, printers, poets, courtiers, and critics.”³² Blair Worden argues that censorship in England was more unpredictable, confusing and volatile than it ever was repressive.³³ Stephen Greenblatt paints a more draconian picture of censorship in the Renaissance; he writes that “there was no freedom of expression in Shakespeare’s England, on the stage or anywhere else.”³⁴ Debora Shuger, in an original intervention, advocates for the censors. According to her, censorship in most cases, was a perfectly legitimate weapon to deploy against scandalous writings that violated both the existing legislation, and the norms and ideals of society.³⁵

Not only would these scholars agree that early modern actors such as the Master of the Revels,³⁶ the Crown or even Shakespeare or Jonson made sense of censorship through different sets of distinctions (much like them today), indeed, they would undoubtedly also be in agreement that literary historians today might also find support for their different views through a different

³¹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 18.

³² Though both Burt and Patterson agree on the fact that cooperation between the censors and the writers, sometimes existed, they disagree however on the extent, as well as on the severity of these instances of censorship. See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, Preface X.

³³ See Worden, Blair. *Literature and Political Censorship*, pp. 49, 53.

³⁴ See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*. W. W. Norton Et Company, 2019, esp. Introduction.

³⁵ Shuger, Debora K. “Civility and Censorship.” *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility the Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, 2006, pp. 91–97.

³⁶ The Master of the Revels was an officer under the Lord Chamberlain. The tasks required of the master of the Revels changed throughout the position’s existence. At first, it served the purpose of hosting, and overseeing royal festivities and state theater “His duties were to have care merely of the entertainments at the Court; he did not attempt to control the professional actors, or to exercise any jurisdiction over the dramatic amusements of the general public.” In 1581 however, the Queen granted the Master of the Revels, in the “Commission Touching the Powers of the Master,” with jurisdiction over the public drama and its licensing. In this work, any reference to the Master of the Revels is to be assumed to be post-1581, or after tMotR **officially** became responsible for stage censorship. For the earlier history of the Master of the Revels and state censorship more generally, see A. Feuiller. *Le Hurram des Menus-Plaisirs*, 1910, and E. K. Chamblwrs, *Sous on the History of the Revels Office*, 1906.

set of distinctions, both different today from one another, but also centuries ago from those assumed by the most important and prominent early modern agents of the period.³⁷ The ubiquitous ambiguity of censorship as a whole appears to be as prevalent in contemporaneity as it may have been in the Renaissance, as many decisions emanating from the figures of authority at the time such as the Master of the Revels, for example, were incoherent at best.³⁸ Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels and censor for the last two years of James I's rule, and censor under the command of both Charles I and Charles II,³⁹ in another incident implicating Philip Massinger, rejected the latter's play because of its depiction of foreign policy. His actions, recorded in his office-book—an amalgamation of prudential documents wherein he reported various events—are described by Richard Dutton “as not merely recording his business affairs but rhetorically embellishing them with self-righteous commentary so as to pre-empt hypothetical criticism.”⁴⁰ Herbert's seemingly disjointed reasoning is first highlighted in an

³⁷ See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, esp. 10; and Bush, Douglas. *The Renaissance and English Humanism*. University of Toronto Press, 1972, chapter 1, esp. 16.

³⁸ In essence, the arguments presented here may confront error on multiple fronts. Our understanding of censorship today is in many ways rooted in the analysis of censorship of the past. Unfortunately, we are soon faced with the reality that the instability of the foundation upon which rests the very definition of censorship is weakened by early modern disputes on the legitimacy of the word itself. What I mean by this is that these modern divergences in understanding, defining and conceptualizing censorship are deeply rooted in carelessness, voluntary inconsistencies, and ambiguities in defining the word in the Renaissance. See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, preface.

³⁹ Today, questions about Sir Henry Herbert's position as the Master of the Revels under king Charles I and King Charles II have resurfaced. Though most of the scholarship and records maintain that Herbert occupied the position of censor under the reign of both Kings, Bawcutt shows that Herbert had been stripped of his duty for a brief time and has then unsuccessfully attempted to reassert his right to the position after the restoration of King Charles II in 1660. For more information on Sir Henry Herbert in general, the Cambridge online database of the History of British Parliament is a great resource, see Healy, Simon. “Herbert, Sir Henry (1594-1673), of the Revels Office, Tuttle Street, Westminster and Woodford, Essex; Later of Ribbesford, Nr. Bewdley, Worcs. and James Street, Covent Garden, Mdx.” *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629*, 2010, <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1604-1629/member/herbert-sir-henry-1594-1673>. Accessed 8 Oct. 2022; and for further information on Herbert's tenure, specifically on whether he remained the censor under the reign of King Charles II, see Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996, esp. 90-110.

⁴⁰ See Dutton, chapter fourth, in Chiari's *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018.

episode where “[he] I did refuse to allow of a play of Messinger’s, because itt did contain dangerous matter, as the deposing of Sebastian King of Portugal, by Philip the (Second,) and their being a peace sworn twixte the kings of England and Spayne.”⁴¹

Herbert’s decision did not hold for long, as he essentially licensed what seemed to be the same play, *Believe as You List* less than a year later on May 7th 1630.⁴² So, Herbert archived his decision— the official statement and refusal to license the play— then overturned it without consulting another governing body or leaving any commentary like he had systematically done in the past.⁴³ We learn from this event that Herbert’s rectitude, then, appeared to extend solely to what the *censor himself* would perceive as an ostentatious threat to the throne or to the realm⁴⁴— and it became just as clear in the Renaissance as it would appear to us today, that Henry Herbert enjoyed a cavalier supremacy because he had been sanctioned by the King himself, and only he could terminate his employment.⁴⁵ Indeed, Herbert had a quasi-supremacy over anything related to drama, and had proven to be, over the years, an authoritative figure, ruling on all matters associated to theater.⁴⁶ Why, then, would a seemingly autonomous censor—whose recordings

⁴¹ Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 171.

⁴² See Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 172 for a detailed account of the incident; and Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, fourth chapter: Richard Dutton’s The Limits of a Censor’s Authority: The Case of the Masters of the Revels, esp. pp. 68-72 for commentary.

⁴³ Richard Dutton writes extensively about Herbert’s way of recording different dealings and events. Most notably is his method of “not merely recording his business affairs but rhetorically embellishing them with self-righteous commentary so as to pre-empt hypothetical criticism.” It remains unclear whether Herbert had forgotten to record his decision; or if his comments was lost or misplaced; or if he simply did not wish to record this specific decision. See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, fourth chapter; Richard Dutton’s The Limits of a Censor’s Authority: The Case of the Masters of the Revels, pp. 68-69.

⁴⁴ Censorship as a word and as a concept was, for most of the Renaissance, intangible. And the censors too, were for the most part, objectively subjective.

⁴⁵ Though the Masters of the Revels, in theory, had virtually no protection from their own superiors, Herbert was an exception to the rule. Having been commissioned by the King himself, he possessed some sort of symbolic security that nobody dared go against. See Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996, esp. pp. 34-40.

⁴⁶ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 78.

indicate, at best, an aptitude for problem solving, and at worst a dubious mania for secrecy and self-righteousness— absolve the King of any involvement in all recorded cases but one: *King and the Subject?*

It is likely that the answer to this question lies not so much with the gravity of the censoring infraction committed in the play as much as it does with its characterization.⁴⁷ The non-uniformity of Herbert's rulings could have been rooted in sudden insecurities about his position as the Master of the Revels.⁴⁸ Herbert was sued by the King's Men— the prestigious acting company that Shakespeare was a part of for most of his career⁴⁹—over a stage performance of Jonson's *The Magnetick Lady*, until the High Commission intervened by reversing the court's judgement following the players' first petition, and Herbert, relieved, documented that “my lords Grace of Canterbury bestowed many words upon me [...] and discharged mee of any blame... [and he] Layd the whole fault [...] upon the players.”⁵⁰ Censorship was not, in other words, a constant notion set apart from ambiguity or the mercurial grasp of the rulers, but a scepter to be wielded by those already in power.

⁴⁷ Herbert documented his 'day-to-day' business in his office-book. Though further analysis shows that Herbert mostly only recorded his blameless outcomes, and his many thanks to his supervisors, whilst completely omitting the more dubious instances of his reign. For a parallel between Herbert's actions and the overarching self-preservation instincts of different persons of influence in early modern England. See McMullan, John L. “crime, law and order in early modern England.” *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1987, pp. 252–74.

⁴⁸ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 68.

⁴⁹ Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, chapter 21 *The King's Men, 1608-1642*, esp. 366-393.

⁵⁰ *The Magnetick Lady* was sanctioned by Sir Henry Herbert himself, yet the actors were blamed for performing it, and the play was put under review. The actors(players) then petitioned to be absolved of any wrongdoing as they argued the words to be those of the poet, and the outrage to be caused by a lack of oversight(censorship) at the level of the Master of the Revels, who would have had to read and license the play. The players' first petition was accepted, only to be overturned by the Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, when Sir Henry Herbert was in danger of being summoned to court. Indeed, in a note dating from the 24th of October. 1633, a relieved Sir Henry Herbert writes “Upon a second petition of the players ... my lords Grace of Canterbury bestowed many words upon mee... and discharged mee of any blame... layd the whole fault of their play upon the players.” See Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 184.

Despite being deemed dangerous, the play *Believe as You List* was licensed when Massinger transposed its setting from Rome to Spain and an Ancient King for Sebastian.⁵¹ As far as we know, the play was licensed less than a year after the changes were made,⁵² and the swiftness of the response was due to two distinct reasons: it compromised the country's foreign relations, and it constituted an overt offense, or, the impersonation of the King of Spain, a close ally to Charles I.⁵³ To what degree these edits were successful in shrouding the real content of the play is debatable. Yet, what *should* have objectively been a banned play because of its content—namely the annexation of Portugal in 1580 by King Phillip II—was ultimately deemed acceptable, and upon transposing its setting, was subsequently put back in production by Herbert's own accord.⁵⁴ On the other hand, what should have been, in essence, a much lesser infraction—a passage in reference to the arbitrary taxation in *King and the Subject*—was in fact swiftly sent to King Charles himself.⁵⁵ The shift in prudential judgment between Herbert's different procedures, and their recording, is most apparent through the ambiguity surrounding these instances of censorship and how they were non-uniformly documented on a case by case basis. It becomes clear, then, that censorship, for the Master of the Revels, or in Herbert's case at least, was a tool that indiscriminately legitimized or de-legitimized different ideas and

⁵¹ Though most playgoers were able, in this play just like in many others, to decipher these metaphors, it remained important for artists to distance themselves from their writings, as to be shielded from harm by plausible deniability. See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, 19.

⁵² See Dutton, Richard. *The Limits of a Censor's Authority: The Case of the Masters of the Revels* in Chiari's *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018.

⁵³ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 69.

⁵⁴ This is curious. Although the censors could sometimes be lax, they would have never permitted the staging of plots that depicted or even alluded to the current Monarch's regime, or to their allies. See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*. W. W. Norton Et Company, 2019, pp. 13 for further information on special allowances; and Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 69-72 for the history of the play (*Believe as You List*), its changes, as well as a commentary on its licensing.

⁵⁵ In 1627, Charles I installed a form of forced taxation that was not, at the time, authorized by the Parliament. While it was a sore subject to the king, it was in no way comparable to other instances of seditious libel or treason. See Cust, Richard. "Charles I, the Privy Council, and the Forced Loan." *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 1985, pp. 208-35.

discourses, mostly on behalf of the king, but sometimes on behalf of himself, regardless of case law; and that most instances of censorship during Hebert's reign as the Master of the Revels, and in the Renaissance as a whole, did in fact not strictly correspond to any objective foreordained guidelines. Rather, the concept of censorship was ambiguous, thus it extended and was molded to the whim and ambition of the censor.⁵⁶

Many incidents of censorship are confusing, nebulous, and most often contradictory. In 1587 the Stationers' Company had licensed and registered *A Commission sent to the Pope, cardynales, bishops, friers, monkes, with all the other rable of that viperous generation by the high and mighty prince and king Sathanas the Devill of Hell*. That same work was ordered burned by the government days after its publication, despite it having been approved, and legitimately registered by the authorities.⁵⁷ For the artists and players of the period, navigating these webs of inconsistencies became a monumental task of prudence on the one hand, and a roll of dice on the other.⁵⁸ Explicitly, censorship had been officially instituted by the royal proclamation of 1558, prohibiting unlicensed plays and interludes on religion or policy *or anything else* the Master of the Revels might perceive as dangerous.⁵⁹ Implicitly however, a

⁵⁶ See Halbertal, Moshe, and Stephen Holmes. "The Grip of Power." *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel*. Princeton University Press, 2017, 17-66, esp. 17-20, for an interesting argument, one that conceptualizes "the paramount aim of those who successfully attain supreme authority is often reduced to nothing more exalted or idealistic than staying in power." This book poses an interesting argument that helps us understand some of Henry Herbert's dubious actions. Also, see Dutton, Richard. "Shakespeare and Marlowe: Censorship and Construction." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 16-17 for instances when the Masters of the Revels were allegedly biased and self-serving; Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 151; Bawcutt, N. W. *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623-73*. Clarendon Press, 1996; Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 364; and Milton, Anthony. "Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, esp. 626.

⁵⁷ See Cyndia Susan Clegg. *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 60.

⁵⁸ Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 4-6.

⁵⁹ The Elizabethan Proclamation of 1558 prohibited all unlicensed plays from being performed. And officials were instructed to ban all plays "wherein either matters of religion or of the governance of the commonweal shall be handled or treated." See Dugmore, C. W. *Tudor Royal Proclamations*. By Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin,

degree of insolence was to be tolerated.⁶⁰ But where was the line precisely? These ever moving and blurry boundaries between what was permitted and what was not were often trampled, as influential figures of authority such as the Master of the Revels appeared—at times at least—to act out of self-interest.⁶¹ Such a tale is all too common, and I wish to stress the fact that an unfathomable number of actors worked together sometimes, and against each others' best interests oftentimes, for the Crown, and mostly for themselves, in an attempt to censor, delegitimize and control the artistic production of theater in early modern England. This motley of officials and persons of influence complicated the artists' task as they had to cautiously navigate multiple sets of rules and customs, most of which were different from one official to the next.⁶²

My thesis explores the different ways in which censorship was manifested; the different institutions, actors, and censors; how the different censoring mechanisms merge at certain times, cooperate, or even disagree at others. I wish to bring forth a clear understanding of the

C.S.V. II: The Later Tudors (1553–1587). Pp. Xxiv 548. III: The Later Tudors (1588–1603). pp. 440. New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1969, pp. 115; and Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 49; and Marshall, Peter. *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation*. Yale University Press, 2017; Also, see Shuger, Debora. “The Index and the English: Two Traditions of Early Modern Censorship.” *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, pp. 56–77, for the history of the earliest lists of forbidden books, many of which preceded Elizabeth's ascent as the Queen of England, years prior to the proclamation in 1558. Also, recent analyses have suggested that the Royal proclamation of 1558 may have been rooted in an even earlier code. D. M. Loades writes that “The roots of censorship lay far back in the Middle Ages, in two separate but related codes [...] the early fifteenth-century statutes against Lollardy.” See Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 141–57.

⁶⁰ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 8; and Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, for an interesting discussion of tolerance and censorship.

⁶¹ This phenomenon was not exclusive to the censors, indeed, writers, courtiers, printers, and various other influential figures of the English Renaissance such as Jonson or Shakespeare, for example, often acted out of self-interest. For obvious reasons, the most prominent playwrights of the period were coerced into using theatre as a site of discipline. Burt suggests that “Shakespeare and Jonson helped authorize the professional theatre by disciplining it through local anti-theatricalism [...] they reformed their audiences by legitimating certain practices and delegitimizing others.” See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, pp. 84.

⁶² See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, pp. 6.

genealogical entity of censorship, to prove that censorship is bigger than any one institution, any one individual, any one tyrant. I wish to illustrate that censorship is an amalgamation of every different susceptible censoring party working together mostly, and sometimes not— voluntarily or involuntarily— in their ever-changing ways of repression and control. I propose a definition in which censorship is both genealogical and fluid, as a mechanism of subversion and subtle— and sometimes not so subtle— control, of legitimization and de-legitimation of ideas, texts, discourses, ideals, and dialogue. While this definition might seem too vast, there is a perversely attractive clarity in theorizing censorship as such: I have opted, indeed, to retain my definition of censorship for two related but succinct reasons, both of which derive from my enthusiasm in leaving no stones unturned. First, I aim to disrupt the false assumptions that censorship was strictly a result of the state or the church’s monopoly in all matters of regulation and control in early modern England. Second, only through expanding my definition of censorship was I able to account for the diversity of its forms. Indeed, my goal is not simply to define censorship, nor to account for its more elusive forms, rather, I wish to analyze the nuances between these forms, to better understand the early modern patterns in deploying various censoring stratagems in different situations. The following chapters, then, are full of evidence of complex censoring mechanisms at work— most of which were deployed by different agents. In advancing my interpretation of censorship, indeed, I wish to affirm and paint the canvas of a more sophisticated story about censorship in the Renaissance.

CHAPTER 1

Beheadings, Iconoclasm, and the Theatricality of Censorship

This chapter is full of evidence of complex and often-overlooked modes of censorship at work. Recent studies on censorship in the Renaissance are chiefly anchored around press censorship and licensing, and have little to say about other means through which the State exerts its powers, such as the influence it holds over the market, over the common social and cultural ideology, as well as the ways in which it engages in scare-tactics and propaganda.⁶³ While it has been fashionable, lately, to downplay the grasp that the crown may have had on censorship, I intend to take another look at the control exerted by the State through non-traditional means of repression and control. I will test the view that there was no systematic control of the licensing enterprise, whilst also exploring the overarching issue of what I have come to define as *trickle-down-censorship* or cascading censorship, a phenomenon wherein overwhelming repression ultimately breeds more oppression.⁶⁴ By this I mean that a censor can influence other institutions in implementing their own censoring mechanisms. Social censorship, and self-censorship, to name but two, are examples of this phenomenon. Artists self-regulate for fear of having their ears slit; printers and publishers are not willing to print certain works for fear of being raided, etc. As a result, society becomes afraid of owning and reading heretical books.⁶⁵ In this chapter I

⁶³ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990; Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974; S. Lambert, "State control of the press in theory and practice: the role of the Stationers' Company before 1640". R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Censorship and the control of print in England and France*. Winchester, 1992, esp. pp. 1-32; A. B. Worden, "Literature and political censorship in early modern England", in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Too mighty to be free: censorship in Britain and the Netherlands, Britain and the Netherlands*. Zutphen, 1987, esp. pp. 45-62.

⁶⁴ See Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 371.

⁶⁵ For evidence of market censorship, see Kitch, Aaron. *Political Economy and the States of Literature in Early Modern England*, London, Routledge 2009, pp. 79; Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern*

will argue that the State maintained strict censorship in the Renaissance through various means of repression. There is no question that early modern censorship, in the wake of print was inefficient or even impossible to maintain, and under these same parameters, we might even find ourselves in agreement that the legislative control of the press was impossible to enforce, given the various stratagems to which artists resorted: book smuggling, writing under aliases, clandestine printing presses, etc.⁶⁶ The sheer multiplication of prints, Annabel Patterson argues, “made the task [of censoring] both capricious and quantitatively impossible.”⁶⁷ However, my analysis suggests that the state shifted its censoring approach, mostly to combat the emergence of these techniques and stratagems that evade censorship, whilst lessening the financial strain on its coffers.⁶⁸ This led to an increase in repression, and largely contributes to the proliferation of non-institutionalized censoring mechanisms that are heavily reliant on the crown’s sentiments, whilst still retaining a semblance of independence.⁶⁹ This chapter, then, poses a small corrective to the overarching narrative that ‘the State was weak,’ and that ‘censorship was too difficult to pull-off,’ by suggesting that in times where the Crown may have been weakened or in financial duress, censorship was transformed from a bureaucratic operation to an artform: *the theatricality*

English Literature. Routledge, 2018, esp. introduction; and Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*, Cornell University Press, 1993, esp. introduction; and for testimonies relating to the ownership of heretical books, see Stuart Royal Proclamations 1625-1646, edition. James F. Larkin. Oxford UP, Clarendon, 1983. pp. 700-5; and for a detailed discussion of these proclamations in Cressy, David. “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 371.

⁶⁶ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, introduction, esp. 11-13.

⁶⁷ Patterson, 12.

⁶⁸ Milton, Anthony. “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, pp. 625.

⁶⁹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990; Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974; S. Lambert, “State control of the press in theory and practice: the role of the Stationers’ Company before 1640”. R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Censorship and the control of print in England and France*. Winchester, 1992, esp. pp. 1-32; A. B. Worden, “Literature and political censorship in early modern England.” A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Too mighty to be free: censorship in Britain and the Netherlands, Britain and the Netherlands*, Zutphen, 1987, pp. 45-62.

of censorship. I define this concept as the use of ostentatious ceremonies and rituals as platforms for the State to maintain and exercise power. Such events include symbolic displays of power in executions, book burnings, the hangman ceremony, and parading offenders through the most populated areas in London. I argue that the addition of these ceremonies to the already-existing state censorship apparatus reinforced the crown's authority over texts and discourses. It is crucial, then, to avoid mistaking the crown's momentary laxity in orchestrating common censorship practices during the rise of public burnings and beheadings for an outright lack of censorship. Instead, we might be better served in perceiving the crown's actions as a voluntary shift in strategy, rather than an involuntary loss of control. Before delving into said evidence of any kind, it is necessary to examine the hermeneutics of censorship.

Of course, the modes of censorship in Renaissance England differed greatly; their application was always shifting, and the prevalence as well as the severity of the punishments remained purposefully vague and uncertain, as each ruler brought forth and imprinted their own ideals on society.⁷⁰ It was customary, indeed, for new rulers to swiftly assert their ideals on society, differentiating themselves from their predecessor. For example, Queen Mary in 1553, in her first proclamation, bifurcated from her predecessor's strategy and denounced the printing of "lewd" books, treatises, ballads, rhymes. Laws, proclamations, and book indexes were subject to many changes from one regime to the next, the only immutable item, however, seemed to be that of censorship.⁷¹ Shakespearean England inherited a culture of censorship that was so deeply

⁷⁰ For a discussion about Queen Mary's potential motives. See Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 151; and for Mary's proclamation, See Tudor Royal Proclamations, ii (New Haven and London) pp. 5-6.

⁷¹ See Clare, Janet. "Historicism and the Question of Censorship in the Renaissance." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1997, pp. 155-76; Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974; Shuger, Debora. "The Index and the English: Two Traditions of Early Modern Censorship." *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, pp. 56-77,

implanted in society that the public became desensitized to the many episodes of rampant repression, hence only the most extreme examples stood out.⁷² I have opted, then, to begin our story of censorship in the middle of the fourteenth century, as it was during this period that evidence of censorship became conclusive, instances of repression were recorded, while overwhelming public reactions to these events became sufficiently substantiated.⁷³

In England, “the roots of censorship lay far back in the Middle Ages, in two separate but related codes,” and take us past the Puritan revolution of the 17th century.⁷⁴ In 1352, the laws of treason—the statutes known as *Scandalum Magnatum*—were the chief policies brought forth under the Act of 1352, wherein insults, blasphemy, or inappropriate comments towards the king, whether public or private, in speech or in writing (and even in thought), became an act of treason.⁷⁵ Half a century later, the laws of the Church prohibited the production and reproductions of ancient scriptures, translations, and anything else the Church assumed to fall under the very dubious blanket of ‘heretical writings.’ This is what we have come to understand today as the first official instance of licensing censorship.⁷⁶ The Church was also in position to punish—however it saw fit—makers, traffickers, writers, and sellers of heretical books. In

⁷² Antony Milton argues in *Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England* that it has been fashionable for historians of the Renaissance to wrongfully emphasize the degree to which the coercive powers of the state were limited. For evidence of the contrary, see Milton, Anthony. “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998; and for the specific page of the earlier citation, pp. 625.

⁷³ The historical evidence we have prior to the fourteenth century is quasi-inexistent. It is not my purpose here to debate the origins of censorship in England, however, I have chosen the Act of 1352 as the starting point in this essay, as it appears to be the date most agreed upon by literary historians.

⁷⁴ Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 142.

⁷⁵ See Bellamy, J. G. “The Great Statute of Treasons.” *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970. 59-101. Print. Cambridge Studies in English Legal History; and “United Kingdom - Edward III (1327-77).” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom/Edward-III-1327-77> (2/3/23).

⁷⁶ Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 142; Wilkins, David. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae Et Hiberniae, a Synodo Verolamiensi A.d. 446. Ad Londinensem A.d. 1717. Accedunt Constitutiones Et Alia Ad Historiam Ecclesiae Anglicanae Spectantia*. Culture Et Civilisation, 1964.

accordance with the provisions of the statute of 1414, parliament had indeed granted ecclesiastical authorities the right to crack down on instances of supposed subversion and heresy.⁷⁷ By the year 1414, the State alongside ecclesiastical officials had effectively put in place a repressive system of legitimation and de-legitimation of discourse, wherein any offense directed at either the crown or the clergy would in fact be treated as an attack on both.⁷⁸

These two codes, then, emerged as the basis of law and order for both State and Church—and they remained so until the late 1500s.⁷⁹ Under Queen Mary, the maintenance of law and order had perhaps reached the point of maximum tension, and the next decades were marked by a heightened sense of vigilance by artists, printers, publishers, patrons, even readers, as they navigated increasingly repressive censors.⁸⁰ In 1536, in an early public crack-down of printers and book traffickers, the State issued a series of proclamations, wherein unlicensed printed works were to be given up within forty days.⁸¹ And less than ten years later, in 1543, the State reaffirmed its position on licensing and proclaimed that “if any printer, bookbinder, bookseller, or any other person or persons . . . print or cause to be printed, or utter, sell, give or deliver within this realm or elsewhere within the king’s dominions of any of the books or writings before abolished or prohibited,”⁸² then, “the offender was to be imprisoned for three months and fined 10 pounds for each book [...] on second offense the offender would be liable

⁷⁷ See Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 142.

⁷⁸ See Wilkins, David. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae Et Hiberniae, a Synodo Verolamiensi A.d. 446. Ad Londinensem A.d. 1717. Accedunt Constitutiones Et Alia Ad Historiam Ecclesiae Anglicanae Spectantia*. Culture Et Civilisation, 1964, pp. 310-322.

⁷⁹ See Loades, 143.

⁸⁰ See Elton, G.R. *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation*. University Press, 1972; and Loades 143-44.

⁸¹ Such works include “Sundry writings and books, as well imprinted as other in which such writings and books many open and manifest errors and slanders are contained, not only in derogation and diminution of the dignity and authority royal of the king’s majesty and of his Imperial Crown, but also directly and expressly against the good and laudable statutes of this realm.” See *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, pp. 235-237.

⁸² Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 149.

for forfeiture of goods and perpetual imprisonment.”⁸³ The crown ramped up its pressure, and for the first time in their recorded history, statutes became more exhaustive, and they were accompanied by an extensive list of penalties.⁸⁴

Though these statutes marked, in theory, a new stage in the evolution of royal policy, in practice they were unsuccessful in eradicating the underground printing networks⁸⁵— the groups of clandestine agents who printed and imported banned books.⁸⁶ It was not until the bishop of Worcester, Hugh Latimer, in a snarky remark exclaimed that he had “never seen, surely, so little discipline as is now-a-days,” and he vowed to “have their [hereticals] mouths stopped.”⁸⁷ And ultimately until the advent of the catholic Mary in 1553 that real progress towards *total* censorship was made. The next few years were characterized by the counter-reformation, but they generally followed the same formula: more detailed statutes were brought forth; more sophisticated laws were passed; and punishments became more public and brutal.⁸⁸ Indeed, with Queen Mary’s energy behind it, the close collaboration between ecclesiastical officials and the crown ushered a flurry of arrests and punishments, and less than two years into her reign, in

⁸³ Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 149.

⁸⁴ The crown’s heightened sense of urgency in further policing and controlling licensing was a response to the religious and political climate in England. The Reformation brought about significant changes, challenging the court’s authority on multiple fronts. The crown, seeking to re-assert its control over the masses, re-enforced its position on censorship. The stricter statutes and extensive list of penalties, then, aimed to curb the proliferation of ideas deemed heretical, subversive, or simply unwanted. See Duffy, Eamon. “The English Reformation After Revisionism.” *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 3, 2006, pp. 720–31; and Haigh, Christopher. “The Recent Historiography of the English Reformation.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1982, pp. 995–1007, for more detailed discussions of the English Reformation.

⁸⁵ See Elton, G.R. *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation*. University Press, 1972; and Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974 for commentary on policing in early modern England.

⁸⁶ See Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. “In the Wake of the Printing Press.” *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1978, pp. 183–97; and Grendler, Paul F. *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605*. Princeton University Press, 1977, esp. chapter 5 *The Clandestine Book Trade* for further discussion of clandestine printing presses and censorship.

⁸⁷ See Corrie, George Elwes, editor. *Sermons by Hugh Latimer, Sometime Bishop of Worcester*. Cambridge: Printed at the University Press, 1844. Open Library, Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/sermonss00latiuoft/page/n1/mode/1up?ref=ol&view=theater>, Accessed 1 March 2023.

⁸⁸ See Elton, G.R. *Policy and Police: The Enforcement of the Reformation*. University Press, 1972.

1555, “it became a felony to publish slanders against the king and queen which could be construed as treason, the penalty being the loss of the right hand [...]” Finally, in June 1558, “martial law was extended to cover the possession of any heretical or treasonable book, wherever published.”⁸⁹ Indeed, through the Act of Supremacy of 1534, the King or Queen of England also became the Supreme Head of the Church of England.⁹⁰ The close collaboration between both parties, then, extended far beyond its original scope— that of censoring “lewd and seditious tales”— rather, censorship was often used, also, as an extension of the crown’s will and values over that of the masses.⁹¹

Overall, the cooperation between royal and ecclesiastical officials was successful. Indeed, according to the records, around twenty persons were proceeded against, and fewer were burnt at the stake or hung for heresy.⁹² However, I would argue that recent analyses of the State’s success do not fully account the degree to which these different laws and practices indirectly succeeded at curbing the widespread of so-called heresy. Practically, the evidence that we have for the effectiveness of these laws is quite dubious, and as Loades points out comes mostly from the records of the council and is not extensive.⁹³ What we know for sure is that censorship laws became more prevalent, and punishments increasingly more brutal. Indeed, with regards to

⁸⁹ See Tudor Royal Proclamations, ii, p. 90.

⁹⁰ See Bray, Gerald, editor. *Documents of the English Reformation*. 3rd ed., The Lutterworth Press, 1994; and Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Act of Supremacy”. Encyclopedia Britannica, 18 Feb. 2011, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Act-of-Supremacy-England-1534>. Accessed 7 June 2023.

⁹¹ See Dutton, Richard. *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England*: Buggeswords. Palgrave, 2000, pp.8.

⁹² See D. M. Loades, “The Press under the Early Tudors.” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, pp. 32; and Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 147-152.

⁹³ See Loades, 150.

theatre, the crown's true intentions shifted from trying to control players and writers to outright eradicating them.⁹⁴

It is true that any discussion of censorship must begin with their linchpin— the State. However, it has been fashionable in recent scholarship to evoke the image of a penniless, insolvent empire when writing about state censorship in early modern England.⁹⁵ Anthony Milton suggests that “censorship, it is now argued, was merely intended to forestall not criticism, but disorder and subversion.”⁹⁶ Others have also argued that the State possessed neither the means, the power, nor the will nor the personnel to conduct, to exercise nor to engage in exhaustive searches, nor in the *systematic eradication* of ‘the plague’ (literal and metaphorical designation of actors and playwrights from the city authorities).⁹⁷ However, this argument does not account for the crown's adaptability; rather, it proposes that a lack of funding and bureaucratic instability inevitably meant that the crown's grasp on censorship teetered. This argument is flawed, chiefly on two accounts: First, there are problems in trying to suggest, as

⁹⁴ See Dutton, Richard. “Shakespeare and Marlowe: Censorship and Construction.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 23, 1993, esp. pp. 17-18.

⁹⁵ See Clegg, Cyndia Susan. “Privilege, License, and Authority: The Crown and the Press.” *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. pp. 21; and Cressy, David. “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 364.

⁹⁶ See Milton, Anthony. “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, 626. Milton is commenting on the following scholarship: S. Lambert, “State control of the press in theory and practice: the role of the Stationers' Company before 1640”. R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Censorship and the control of print in England and France*. Winchester, 1992, esp. pp. 1-32; idem, “Richard Montagu, Arminianism and censorship.” *Past & Present*. pp. 36-68, esp. 58; A. B. Worden, “Literature and political censorship in early modern England”, in A. C. Duke and C. A. Tamse, eds., *Too mighty to be free: censorship in Britain and the Netherlands, Britain and the Netherlands*. Zutphen, 1987. esp. pp. 45-62; Christopher Hill, “Censorship and English literature.” *The collected essays of Christopher Hill, I: Writing and revolution in 17th century England*. esp. chapter second: N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, Oxford, 1990, pp, 184.

⁹⁷ See Milton, Anthony. “Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998 for the initial comments regarding the crown's “extensive and purposeful control”; and Dutton, Richard. “Shakespeare and Marlowe: Censorship and Construction.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 23, 1993, pp. 14 for the early modern image likening the playwrights to the plague, and on pp. 18 for a citation where Tilney (tMotR) states “as bluntly as anything that [...] the ultimate aim was not control, but eradication”; finally for commentary on the implications of the image (that of the organism), see Loades, D. M. “The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England.” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 141.

recent scholarship has done, that the State was effectively neutered in its capabilities for censoring works and ideas.⁹⁸ To do so, indeed, would absolve the crown of any social responsibility, wherein other forms of censorship, namely self or social censorship could have been defense mechanisms tailored at circumventing the State's wrath. In the Renaissance, immunity was attached to the highly abstract, and artists accepted that self-censoring was simply the cost of doing business "so that nobody would be required to make an example of them."⁹⁹ Second, all arguments centered around the insolvability of the crown when arguing about the scope as well as the severity of censorship cases— one way or another— are inevitably rooted in a logical fallacy. To suggest that "State censorship was the only one that mattered," but also that "the government possessed neither the power nor the personnel to exercise such extensive and purposeful work", would lessen the historical legitimacy of censorship on the one hand, whilst absolving the state of any wrongdoing on the other. I am sure that there is an attractive, if bleak, purity in such a design— in deciding that repression was entirely attributable to a crippled State, and that the censoring factory was running on its last fumes— but the actual evidence is far less endearing.

For the crown and the ecclesiastical officials— in spite of "failed" attempts at total censorship— they learned that the most effective way to accomplish their goal was to make the public "see" and "feel" things. Investigations reveal that the authorities deployed a didactic plan

⁹⁸ Indeed, Anthony Milton argues that discussions of censorship had changed in recent years— that the State, according to newer views, never attempted to "exercise a rigid control over what was written or believed [...] that censorship was merely intended to forestall not criticism, but 'disorder' and 'subversion.'" See Milton, Anthony. "Licensing, Censorship, and Religious Orthodoxy in Early Stuart England." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1998, pp. 625.

⁹⁹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, introduction, introduction, esp. 10-12 for the quotation above; and See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, esp. introduction for an in-depth discussion of the political atmosphere which surrounded writers and artists in the Renaissance and prompted them to self-censor.

of action where citizens could witness book burnings and beheadings as a part of a public display of power, wherein laws and policing discourse became but a secondary concern in comparison to public torture and iconoclasm.¹⁰⁰ It could be argued, then, that the State's failure to implement an efficient censoring mechanism to combat heresy, blasphemy, and sedition, turned out to be a great success, as the state ultimately discovered a much more efficient and cost-effective method of censoring discourse: public displays of power. In failing the first time through "the more traditional" methods of censorship, I argue that the State augmented its approach in censoring different works and ideas, from the impersonal (laws, writings, statutes that one must read) to the theatrical (book burnings and executions for all to witness). After all, royal power was overwhelmingly manifested to its subjects through performance, and Renaissance theater, Jean E. Howard argues, "was far from being a distinct realm apart from the political life of its culture, [and] participated in ideological production."¹⁰¹ The State then deployed a flurry of rambunctious tactics, all of which had the chief mandate of shock and maximum polemical effect— *the theatricality of censorship*. This novel way of overseeing and operating censorship then became a cruel farce— a show of force, as well as an interactive play (pun-intended) on authority and punishment wherein books were burnt, authors were punished and where bystanders would stand watch to decide if they were going to be next.

Symbolic executions and book burnings developed from rare to conventional practices,¹⁰² shifting from an esoteric to an exoteric mode of performativity, and had "over the course of the

¹⁰⁰ See Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 364; and Margaret Aston. *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion 1350-1600*, London: Hambledon, 1992. pp. 291-313.

¹⁰¹ See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, pp. 65; Clare, Janet. "Historicism and the Question of Censorship in the Renaissance." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1997, pp. 155; and Jean E. Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England*, London, 1994.

¹⁰² See Clegg, Cyndia Susan. "Privilege, License, and Authority: The Crown and the Press." *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. pp. 60; and Cressy 366. Under Queen Elizabeth, burnings

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [...] changed from a bureaucratic to a quasi-theatrical performance.”¹⁰³ The State orchestrated public rituals of censorship, wherein seeing had by metonymy taken on a broader meaning beyond eyesight, rather, it involved dialog and discourse, audiences and speakers, spectacles and spectators, laughter and chaos, thereby transforming the mechanical process of transduction to a fear-inducing concoction of mental imagery and visual perception. Royal power was also embedded within the early modern English social consciousness, as the State dealt in the economies of shame, by “condemn[ing] books to be burnt, in the most public manner that can be,”¹⁰⁴ [...] and forcing “prisoners themselves to participate in their punishment by throwing their books in the fire”¹⁰⁵ all around London, but specifically in the busiest streets, including Westminster Palace Yard, Cheapside, Smithfield market, and Paul’s Cross.¹⁰⁶ Recent scholarship on emotional responses to written and visual stimuli can also help us make sense of the crown’s shift in its censoring approach. Indeed, recent fMRIs (functional magnetic resonance imaging) of the brain, according to Rebecca Keogh et al. in *The Critical Role of Mental Imagery in Human Emotion*, among other studies, has shown the impact of perception, imagery, and presence— in short, seeing— on emotional reactions.¹⁰⁷ There appears to be overwhelming evidence that ‘seeing’ things— as opposed to reading, or hearing them— greatly affects the brain in how it manufactures a psychological response.¹⁰⁸

were rare, and they were often delegated to the Company of the Stationers. James I however, reverted to burning books in the most public ways possible, notably at Paul’s cross and in the busiest streets of London.

¹⁰³ See Cressy, David. “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 361-362; and Margaret Aston. *Faith and Fire: Popular and Unpopular Religion 1350-1600* London, 1992.

¹⁰⁴ See Cressy, 370.

¹⁰⁵ See Cressy, 363.

¹⁰⁶ See Peter W M. Blayney. “The Bookshops in St. Paul’s Cross Church yard.” *Bibliographical Society*, London, 1990.

¹⁰⁷ See Wicken Marcus, Keogh Rebecca and Pearson Joel. “The critical role of mental imagery in human emotion: insights from fear-based imagery and aphantasia” *The Royal Society Publishing*. 2021.

¹⁰⁸ See Evelyn C. Ferstl, Mike Rinck, D. Yves von Cramon. “Emotional and Temporal Aspects of Situation Model Processing during Text Comprehension: An Event-Related fMRI Study.” *Journal Cognitive Neuroscience* 2005, pp. 17; Nastase, S.A., Liu, YF., Hillman, H. et al. The “Narratives” fMRI dataset for evaluating models of

Therefore, public displays of power broke the perpetrator's psyche, and instilled fear on levels far beyond what laws and proclamations ever could, and scare-tactics and propaganda were its main mode.

At other times, the locus of punishment expanded far beyond the scope of theatrics and shifted from the mind to the body. William Prynne was a trained lawyer whose writing was his downfall. In his most controversial treatise, *Histrion-Mastix*, he sounded off about social conventions and made enemies in all social circles by critiquing bishops, makeup on women, long hair on men, stage cross-dressing, and has implied "that any woman on the stage was a whore."¹⁰⁹ The chancellor of the exchequer, Lord Cottington, ultimately sentenced Prynne to a "self-consciously novel mode of punishment."¹¹⁰ William Prynne was paraded in the most populated streets of London and made a spectacle as he had been transported to different key sites for torture. At Westminster and Cheapside, his ears were cut off, and a page was stuck on his head "declaring the nature of his offense."¹¹¹ Finally, with iron, he was branded a seditious libeller— 'S.L.' was thus marked on his face.¹¹² The State was engaged in the management of scare-tactics and propaganda, where "burnings were announcements of *official* displeasure" (my emphasis), and where "public performance was orchestrated for maximum polemical effect."¹¹³

naturalistic language comprehension. *Sci Data* 8, 250 (2021); Usée F, Jacobs AM, Lütke J. From Abstract Symbols to Emotional (In-)Sights: An Eye Tracking Study on the Effects of Emotional Vignettes and Pictures. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2020; and Borst, G., & Kosslyn, S. M. (2010). Fear selectively modulates visual mental imagery and visual perception. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 63, 833–839 for an overview of the literature on the effects of visual stimulation on fear.

¹⁰⁹ See Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 369; and Prynne, William. *Histrion-Mastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actors Tragedy*. Bowker, originally consulted in William Prynne, *Histrion-Mastix. The Players Scovrge; or, Actors Tragaedie*, London, 1633.

¹¹⁰ See Cressy, 370.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² See Thomas B. Howell, ed., *Cobbett's Complete Collection of State Trials*, London, 1809.

¹¹³ See Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 154 for a discussion of the early modern positive management of propaganda; and Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 367-368.

The crown's sudden incorporation of propaganda as a means for controlling the population is not a novel idea, and remnants of it can be found in Bacon's earlier papers, wherein he adamantly argued that prevention was better than cure. If "[...] by touching half a dozen offenders may sufficiently warn half a hundred, I think those laws nor the execution of them may justly be called extreme."¹¹⁴ The state, then, symbolically executed books and libels, tortured the human body as well as symbolically inscribed pain on their writings, all in the name of *prevention*. These public displays of cruelty linked flesh wounds, pain, humiliation and suffering to treason and heresy, or anything else the state could potentially perceive as such.

John Milton's argument that censorship was doomed from its inception because of bureaucratic incompetence is then challenged on multiple accounts.¹¹⁵ On the one hand, it is true that the financial burden weighed heavy on the crown;¹¹⁶ it is true, as Annabel Patterson writes, that "censorship was inefficient and incoherent"¹¹⁷; it is also true that the more institutional, 'hands-on' operations of censorship, i.e., licensing censorship, had diminished. On the other hand, the whole premise of the argument does not account for the proliferation of alternative modes of censorship such as self, market, ideological or social censorship, many of which are

¹¹⁴ See Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 154; and England, Public Record Office. Secretaries of State: State Papers Domestic, Elizabeth I, vol. 44. url: <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Eliz.html>. Accessed March 1, 2023.

¹¹⁵ John Milton, in his famous speech *Areopagitica*, was one of the first scholars of the Renaissance to argue that censorship could not work. His two arguments are quantity and quality. First, there simply are not enough censors. Second, he likened censors to bureaucrats, incapable of assessing the more complex scholarly arguments. Thus, according to Milton, censorship was impossible to enforce because the State had an inadequate number of competent censors. See Milton, John. *Areopagitica: A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing to the Parliament of England*. 2009.

¹¹⁶ In 1557, the Company of the Stationers was effectively contracted and tasked with various censoring duties. The State opted to privatize and outsource most of its 'grunt-work' to the Stationer's Company, allowing them to exercise a police power over books and theatre, on behalf of the crown. The State began shedding the more time- and money-consuming activities in favor of theatricality. See Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 364.

¹¹⁷ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 13.

direct consequences of the crown's shift in strategy.¹¹⁸ The State outsourced and delegated many of its censoring responsibilities to the Company of Stationers, granting them the authority to exercise power over books, writings, and pamphlets on their behalf, which mostly corroborates our argument¹¹⁹: that whilst acknowledging that the State could have had real financial woes, they never abandoned censorship, rather, they adapted their ways of doing so.¹²⁰ As Cressy argues, [book burning] “was didactic, polemical, punitive, and instructive. Just as a state execution is not only about killing but says something about the might and the wrath of the lawful killers, so the ritual destruction of books conveys messages about orthodoxy, authority, and command.”¹²¹ It could be said, then, that hands on censorship acted as a sieve that eliminated the more problematic texts and ideas, leaving errant and minute instances of subversion to be culled through other means. Low-key, the crown's decrease in direct dominion over censorship affairs marked the development of a system of diversification of censorship— wherein semi-autonomous parties would exercise different modes of repression, whilst collaborating on the bigger picture, that is, total repression over all libelous, scandalous, and heretical writings.¹²²

Such evidence as we have today for the effectiveness of the theatricality of censorship is not extensive, however, a few testimonies from 1625, and an anonymous pamphlet from the 1640s survived and offer us a glimpse into the ethos of the period— not only into the psyches of

¹¹⁸ Though lax, institutional censorship and regulations never ceased to exist, rather they acted as a sieve, eliminating the most flagrant and pressing issues. The theatricality of censorship was meant as a supplementary mechanism to the already existing censoring institutions, and thereby added extra layers of security to the already-existing, complex censoring apparatus.

¹¹⁹ See Clegg, Cyndia Susan. “Privilege, License, and Authority: The Crown and the Press.” *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. pp. 3-29.

¹²⁰ See Cyndia Susan Clegg, “Burning Books as Propaganda in Jacobean England.” *Literature and Censorship*, 165-185; Arnold Hunt. “Licensing and Religious Censorship in Early Modern England.” *Literature and Censorship*, pp. 230-231.

¹²¹ See Cressy, David. “Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 374.

¹²² Although the statement is factual, in practicality the evidence we have today is far more nuanced. Different institutions did collaborate with the State in so far as censoring different plays and writings, but they only did so as long as their political, commercial, and ideological interests coincided. See Cressy 364.

artists that may have been rattled, but also the readers of said heretical writings. Commenting on a book purge at Paul's Cross where more than 800 copies of Edward Elton's *God's Holy Mind* were burned, an observer writes that "[the burning at Paul's Cross] is the greatest holocaust that hath been offered in this kind in our memory."¹²³ And in 1640, another anonymous pamphleteer described one such ceremony, recounting that the hangman set ablaze the stage filled with books and then cried "if any man conceal any such papers, he shall be hanged in these halters," after which the pamphleteer "was so afraid, that [he] ran home and burnt all [his] papers, and so saved the hangman a labor."¹²⁴ Thus, it is clear that the theatricality of censorship was an impressive exhibition of power, and the crown's displeasure was felt— both symbolically and physically— by libels and heretics, of course, but also by the common man.

Foucault's idea of the *episteme* can help to better conceptualize the hermeneutics of censorship. For Foucault, *episemes* (systems of thought and knowledge) are governed by rules that make possible the appearance of context in a given society, and objects in a period of time— those rules, beyond those of grammar, mathematics and logic— operate beneath the common individual consciousness, thereby defining, determining and confining the boundaries of human thought both in a given society, and through a given period.¹²⁵ Therefore, the power that society seemingly yields, and the ideals that it supposedly manifests are but an extension of what the

¹²³ See Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 367; and Daniel Featley. *Cyanea Cantio: Or, Learned Decisions, and most prudent and pious directions for students in divinitie; delibered by our late soveraigne of happie memorie, King Iames, at White Hall a few weekes before his death*. London, 1629, 5. The printer complained that almost nine hundred copies were taken and burnt, leaving him in dept. He also writes that "although even innocent ... may bee subject to censure." pp.5. URL: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A00594.0001.001/1:3?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>.

¹²⁴ See Stuart Royal Proclamations 1625-1646, edition. James F. Larkin (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 700-5; Cressy, David. "Book Burning in Tudor and Stuart England." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2005, pp. 371.

¹²⁵ See Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Pantheon Books, 1972, pp. 32; and Gutting, Gary and Johanna Oksala, "Michel Foucault." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/foucault>.

crown perceives as being truthful, right, or decent. Stephen Greenblatt's account of power and control aligns with Foucault's theory that societal ways of thinking are molded over time by those in control. While the monarch, in the Renaissance, according to Greenblatt was no longer a God "with whom lowly mortals could negotiate by means of supplication," the will and power of the monarch remained in possession of parliament and a few other well-entrenched actors, effectively transposing a certain conception of divine power from a godly monarch, to self-serving fiends— this symbolic substitution, Greenblatt writes, was thought of as "putting demons in the place of the one true God."¹²⁶ Foucault's model of the *episteme*, then, can be illustrated more clearly as some kind of trickle-down-censorship economics, wherein the reader dictates the receivability of a work, and thus is responsible for both involuntarily shaping the conditions of its circulation, as well as its hypothetical censorship.¹²⁷

Almost all writers reluctantly accepted to abide by the *rules* so that they would not be made into a spectacle, and to ensure, of course, the free circulation of their works on the book market.¹²⁸ It was in the best interest of all playwrights, also, to avoid certain topics and suppress most political allusions fearing recriminations that would lead to the potential loss of prestige and wealth.¹²⁹ In fact, in 1583, Edmund Tilney was tasked with creating an elite playing company—the Queen's Men— one that drew the most prominent artists from already-existing companies.¹³⁰ These playwrights and actors too, when commissioned by the State to perform at

¹²⁶ See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Freedom*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2010, esp. introduction.

¹²⁷ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, introduction, esp. 4-6.

¹²⁸ See Chiari, 6.

¹²⁹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, esp. intro; and Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, 83-84.

¹³⁰ See Dutton, Richard. *Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England*. St. Martin's Press, 2000, esp. first chapter *Regulation and Censorship* pp. 1-15.

various events, required an unimaginable level of ingenuity in order to evade censorship— *the oblique angle* was thus utilised as a way to abstract one’s message as to be shielded by virtue of plausible deniability; a failure to do so would result— in the best case scenario— in a loss of contracts and capital.¹³¹ A significant economic symbiosis between the patrons and the players was thus established, and it became clear hitherto that the patronage system was a necessity rather than a luxury. Indeed, “those without patronage or permission were subject to the harsh laws against rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars.”¹³² Therefore dramatists mostly used metaphors and allegories to discuss societal matters; they used tactics such as setting plays in foreign countries and in other time periods to distance themselves— both spatially and temporally— from their work. Additionally, the prevailing patronage system meant that artists in the Renaissance had to self-discipline and self-regulate at all times, not only when writing on behalf of the State. Most early modern English writers had patrons who sponsored their work simply in exchange for the prestige of potentially being associated with a prominent writer, and of course, in exchange for the occasional flattering epistle. It was in the best interests of all writers—not only those whose plays were performed at the high Courts for the State—who wished to be published and read, to tame the contents of their work “and develop ideas likely to please their patrons and to silence openly critical views on tricky matters.”¹³³ Hence the importance of evading certain topics as to please one’s patrons; hence the necessity of semiotic

¹³¹ Edmund Tilney, in 1583 was tasked with creating an elite company, subject to his authority. His players were handsomely compensated, and “they received the lion’s share of performances at court over the next several years.” Indeed, the court was only ever interested in sponsoring actors and playwrights that were patronised by its own senior members. These ‘elite’ troupes often rehearsed before the Queen, and were tasked, as Jonson and Shakespeare were to delegitimize certain theatrical practices, and unlicensed actors. See Dutton, *Richard. Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England*. St. Martin's Press, 2000, esp. 5-7.

¹³² See Dutton, *Richard. Licensing, Censorship, and Authorship in Early Modern England*. St. Martin's Press, 2000, pp. 5.

¹³³ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, introduction, esp. pp. 5.

cozenage as a tool for one's work to remain under the radar; and hence too, the often-underestimated importance of self-regulation.¹³⁴ Indeed, in early modern England, writing something *receivable* and that wouldn't get one's play censured by either the State or the ecclesiastical officials, by the market or by one's patron, or even by society was almost impossible, and would have inevitably been a product of self-censorship.¹³⁵

The less-admirable impulses underlying self-censorship, social censorship, ideological censorship, and market-censorship, then, can be viewed as direct consequences of official forms of repression, without necessarily being attributed to them. These elusive forms of censoring works and ideas are linked both directly and indirectly to the crown. Although they are a direct consequence of repression, they evolved beyond a strictly reactionary scope and developed into autonomous mechanisms of counter-suppression. While State pressure was the nucleus from which different ways to forestall potential trouble emerged, these alternative ways of regulating discourse were very different from what one would typically associate with censorship today. Despite their label as *censorship*, these alternative mechanisms, including market censorship, self-censorship, and social-censorship, functioned as mechanisms meant to protect oneself and one's community from potential trouble and retribution from the powers, and ultimately evolved as independent mechanisms of suppression and counter-suppression simultaneously. It could be said, then, that State censorship is the genesis from which alternative forms of regulation emerged and evolved.

¹³⁴ See Chartier, Roger. *Le livre en révolutions*. Paris, 1997; Chartier, Roger. *Inscription and Erasure. Literature and Written Culture from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005; and Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, esp. introduction.

¹³⁵ See Burt, Richard. *Licensed by Authority: Ben Jonson and the Discourses of Censorship*. Cornell University Press, 1993, 18-19.

Based on the ideas presented, it can be concluded that censorship in Renaissance England was not solely limited to state and church censorship but also extended to various other forms of repression, including self-censorship, social censorship, ideological censorship, and market censorship. While these elusive forms of censorship were a direct consequence of repression, they evolved beyond their original scope, and became semi-autonomous mechanisms of counter-suppression. These so-called protection mechanisms that were in theory meant to shield society from State retribution, according to Foucault's model inadvertently perpetrated novel ways of censoring discourse and ideas and became extensions of the very structures they were meant to counteract. Therefore, the prevailing societal norms and the patronage system also played a crucial role in regulating the content of literary works during this period. In tracing the interplay between official and non-official ways of censoring discourse and ideas, I have examined the subtle differences in their origin. Though it would be false to claim, with certainty, that all forms of censorship evolved from the State's overwhelming pressure, it would be equally as erroneous to not acknowledge the State's involvement in their development.

CHAPTER 2

The Oblique Angle:

Shakespeare's Different Methods for Circumventing the Censorship of his Plays & Sonnets

In this chapter, I propose a reading of Shakespeare in which both his plays and sonnets were censored, albeit in different ways through different institutions. My investigation of censorship in the Renaissance reveals two things: first, it reveals the cultural and social anxieties of the era exemplified by society's unconscious participation in boycotting Shakespeare's Sonnets.¹³⁶ Secondly, it also highlights the state's uncompromising policy in quieting any criticism of either society or of those in power, further demonstrating its determination to assert and maintain its control over the masses.¹³⁷ In this chapter, my one object will be to illustrate and increase our understanding of the different censoring mechanisms that have impacted the Shakespeare canon over time. For this end, we must first acknowledge that certain modes of censoring ideas and discourse were applied to particular sets of works, and that Shakespeare himself *accordingly* deployed a wide range of measures to best protect his legacy from censorship.¹³⁸ After all,

¹³⁶ See Robert Matz. "The Scandals of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *ELH*, vol. 77, no. 2, Project Muse, 2010, pp. 477–508; Shuger, Debora. *Censorship and Cultural Sensibility: The Regulation of Language in Tudor-Stuart England*. 2013; and Margreta de Grazia, "The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare Survey*, vol. 46, 1993.

¹³⁷ See Clare, Janet. "Greater Themes for Insurrection's Arguing: Political Censorship of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Stage." *RES NS* vol. 38, 1987; Clare, Janet. "The censorship of the deposition scene in Richard II." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. XLI, no. 161, Oxford UP, 1990, pp. 89–94; Evans, Robert C. "Art Made Tongue-tied by Authority." *Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatic Censorship*; Dutton, Richard. "Mastering the Revels: The Regulation and Censorship of English Renaissance Drama." *Comparative Drama*, vol. 26, no. 4, Project Muse, 1992, pp. 385–90; and Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Freedom*. 2010, esp. introduction.

¹³⁸ This chapter examines the censorship of Shakespeare's works in light of the differences between the application of said censorship regarding different types of works, whilst also exploring Shakespeare's different responses to every unique case.

Shakespeare's cheeky remark in Sonnet 66, "Art made tongue-tied by authority"¹³⁹ serves as a poignant warning that all forms of art and communication were potentially subject to censorship.

Recent scholarship appears to be timid in its interpretation of censorship in the Renaissance— counter-productively airing on the side of extreme caution.¹⁴⁰ In previous chapters I highlighted the importance of including non-traditional means of repression to our analysis of censorship. This chapter goes one step further by exploring different patterns of combating censorship in both Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. This chapter will highlight that the plays and the sonnets were censored differently, but most importantly, it will highlight Shakespeare's ability to circumvent each censoring mechanism while preserving the essence of his vision. Indeed, the plays were experienced publicly, and the most effective way of evading censorship whilst maintaining narrative authenticity was to transpose the entire setting onto a different one. The Sonnets however were experienced in a private setting where re-readings were not only customary but encouraged. Shakespeare could then write in an oblique angle where only a few determined readers could see beyond it, thus being able to make sense of his artistic expression.

Shakespeare's plays were not isolated in a venue, nor did they only serve as a platform for aristocratic propaganda.¹⁴¹ Shakespeare understood that theater could not exist, as the Sonnets

¹³⁹ All citations of the Sonnets are to the Colin Burrow's edition of *The Oxford Shakespeare: Burrow, Colin, editor. The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2002. See pp. 513.

¹⁴⁰ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 29.

¹⁴¹ See Fitter, Chris. *Radical Shakespeare: Politics and Stagecraft in the Early Career*. Routledge, 2011; Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 24; Loades, D. M. "The Theory and Practice of Censorship in Sixteenth-Century England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 24, 1974, pp. 154 for a discussion of early modern propaganda; Pannell, Chris. *The Oxfordian* Vol. 19. 2017 esp. Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England*, pp. 70; and Cyndia Susan Clegg, "Burning Books as Propaganda in Jacobean England." *Literature and Censorship*, esp. pp. 155-165.

do, in the same capacity as private literariness. Rather, theatre is a social event, usually a flamboyant spectacle filled with noise, smells, cheers, boos, props, and laughter.¹⁴² Indeed, theater was an exoteric activity for the playgoers; a place to go not only for leisure but for “political language and information.”¹⁴³ It was not only a grand spectacle, but it was, also, one of society’s main attractions and modes of relieving stress, and it was in the best interest of the State to capture that energy, not only to control the production of narratives, but the whole story altogether.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, State and Church used theater as a mechanism to help legitimize or delegitimize certain practices regardless of how seemingly benign those practices might appear to the modern reader.¹⁴⁵ The sonnets on the other hand cultivated an esoteric and intimate relationship between the reader and the text and moved “to an inward space that might be more genuinely touched by religious ritual.”¹⁴⁶ The different modes of circumventing the censorship of either the plays or the sonnets, then, were a result of the publicness or privacy of their consumption.

One such instance when state and church delegitimized a ‘seemingly benign’ practice is most apparent through their intervention after Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*’s first few stage

¹⁴² See Davison, Peter, et al. “Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function.” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 12, JSTOR, 1982, p. 250; Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, esp. 20-67.

¹⁴³ See Doty, Jeffrey S. “Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, ‘Popularity,’ and the Early Modern Public Sphere.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2010, pp. 183.

¹⁴⁴ See Clare, Janet. “Historicism and the Question of Censorship in the Renaissance.” *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 27, no. 2, University of Chicago Press, Mar. 1997, pp. 158; Stephen Greenblatt, *The Forms of Power and the Power of Forms in the Renaissance*, Volume XV, University of Oklahoma Press, 1982, esp. introduction; and Frazer, Elizabeth. “Shakespeare’s Politics.” *The Review of Politics*, vol. 78, no. 4, 2016, pp. 503–22.

¹⁴⁵ See Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, esp. 65.

¹⁴⁶ See Hokama, Rhema. “Love’s Rites: Performing Prayer in Shakespeare’s Sonnets.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 199–223, esp. 202.

performances.¹⁴⁷ In the essay *The Smell of Macbeth*, Jonathan Gil Harris writes at great length about the impact of stage smells on playgoers, especially how most playgoers' interactions with the plays were both forged within a larger social and cultural syntax of olfaction, and how those exposed to the smells were in turn physiologically pre-conditioned to experiencing the play on multiple levels¹⁴⁸— his proposed metaphor was that of a palimpsest.¹⁴⁹ This discussion takes us a certain way into the abolition of censuring in the English churches and the pathologization of smells.¹⁵⁰ If the smell of incense had evoked for the Christians a supernatural presence, reminiscent of the divine which helped provide a certain mnemonic association, a so-called meditative state of mind befitting of religious devotion, the Protestant Reformation associated the odor of incense to the 'stink of sin' and has eventually blocked its use in English Churches and on stage.¹⁵¹ And thus, the ban of the smells of *Macbeth* is understood amongst literary historians today as a unique and amusing instance of olfactory censorship.¹⁵²

Of course, we might do well to also remember the more serious incidents where an all-out war by proxy was waged through theater. Thus, a famous example is the 1601 failed Essex rebellion. Amidst Queen Elizabeth's uncertain succession, the Earl of Essex, Robert Devereaux "paid Shakespeare's company to revive *Richard II*" in an attempt to destabilize the regime and "put the populace in the mood for a legitimate usurpation."¹⁵³ His motives in promoting the play

¹⁴⁷ Jonathan Gil Harris notes that in its first performances, "[*Macbeth*] the play likely started with a bang, but also a stink," referencing the stage-effects used to produce the effects "Thunder and lightning" (1.1 sd.) See Harris, Jonathan Gil. "The Smell of Macbeth." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 58, no. 4, Oxford UP, 2007, pp. 466.

¹⁴⁸ See Harris, pp. 465–86; and Diana Fuss. *The Sense of an Interior: Four Writers and the Rooms That Shaped Them*. New York: Routledge, 2004. For a useful discussion of the relationship between smell and memory.

¹⁴⁹ See Harris, pp. 480.

¹⁵⁰ See E. G. Cuthbert F. Atchley. *A History of the Use of Incense in Divine Worship*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909.

¹⁵¹ See Harris, pp. 479–82.

¹⁵² Jonathan Harris writes that "Of course, all representations of God— visual, as well as olfactory— had been expunged not just from the churches, but also from the playhouses." See Harris, 486.

¹⁵³ See Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. 2005. Bowker, 239; Paul E. J. Hammer. "The Use of Scholarship: The Secretariat of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex, c. 1585–1601." *The English Historical Review*, vol. 109, no. 430, 1994, pp. 26–51.

were rooted in the scandalous deposition scene in Act 4, wherein King Richard deposes himself. Ultimately, the Rebellion failed, and Robert Devereaux was beheaded for treason.¹⁵⁴ What must be remembered from these stories is not their anecdotal value, but the overarching theme they highlight: that attempts at controlling and manipulating theater were rampant and presented the State, the church, or any persons of great influence and authority, with lively and popular avenues for the spreading of scurrilous claims, while increasingly engaging in demagoguery. The stage, then, provided a fertile intellectual battleground for the powers, and its control far exceeded the mere suppression of unwanted ideas, rather, it presented the perfect breeding ground for the proliferation of one's idea above all others. As argued in previous chapters, and as Stephen Greenblatt writes, "theatricality, then, was not set over against power but was one of power's essential modes."¹⁵⁵

The identification and control of power narrative within the plays but especially beyond them has been intuited at length in Stephen Greenblatt's *Shakespearean Negotiations*, where he hypothesized that the English form of absolutist theater absorbed the contemporaneous energies of political authority.¹⁵⁶ In replicating the ethos of the period, and the essence of said authority, Shakespeare's histories "can be so relentlessly subversive" by producing subversion but providing an outlet for its immediate containment.¹⁵⁷ However, despite Shakespeare's efforts in trying to contain the plays' most radical thoughts within the performance itself, Marjorie Garber

¹⁵⁴ See Levin, Carole. *Historical Dictionary of Tudor England, 1485–1603*. Ed. Ronald H. Fritze. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991, under 'Essex's Rebellion'; and Smith, Lacey Baldwin. *Treason in Tudor England: Politics and Paranoia*. 2014.

¹⁵⁵ Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, esp. 46.

¹⁵⁶ Clare, Janet. "Historicism and the Question of Censorship in the Renaissance." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 27, no. 2, University of Chicago Press, Mar. 1997, pp. 160; and Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. 1980, Bowker.

¹⁵⁷ See Greenblatt esp. pp. 65; and Clare, Janet. "Historicism and the Question of Censorship in the Renaissance." *English Literary Renaissance*, vol. 27, no. 2, University of Chicago Press, Mar. 1997, pp. 160.

writes that “any story about an earlier monarch could, and would, be taken as reflecting upon, predicting, or praising the current monarch, or as offering a potential model or critique of living political figures.”¹⁵⁸ Hence why the history plays were Shakespeare’s most scrutinized, yet equally popular and beloved; and hence too why the most notable controversies surrounding Shakespeare’s plays are mostly rooted in his histories. Indeed, there are two instances, at least, within the plays, where Shakespeare failed to provide a said outlet for the immediate containment of dangerous ideas. I have chosen *I Henry IV* and *Richard II* as the chief examples for my analysis of this phenomenon. First because these plays present unequivocal, and substantiated instances of censorship, also because they illustrate further subtleties in how State censorship was organized, instituted, then officiated in a case-by-case basis. Then, because they illustrate how the stage was often used as a chessboard for political gain.¹⁵⁹ In fact, Thomas Middleton famously used the metaphor of chess to disguise contemporaneous satire. His play, *A Game at Chess*, is noteworthy for replacing influential political figures with chess pieces, concealing controversial political content behind the illusion of various chess moves.¹⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, the production of the play was shut down after only nine days.¹⁶¹

There are strong grounds, indeed, for claiming that *Richard II* was censored by the State, most likely through the involvement of the Master of the Revels Edmund Tilney.¹⁶² *Richard II*

¹⁵⁸ See Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. 2005. Bowker, 90.

¹⁵⁹ See Doty, Jeffrey S. “Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, ‘Popularity,’ and the Early Modern Public Sphere.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2010, esp. 183.

¹⁶⁰ For a detailed discussion of *A Game at Chess*, its themes, and structure, see Yachnin, Paul. “A Game at Chess and Chess Allegory.” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1982, pp. 317–30; and Cogswell, Thomas. “Thomas Middleton and the Court, 1624: ‘A Game at Chess’ in Context.” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1984, pp. 273–88.

¹⁶¹ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 53.

¹⁶² For more nuanced discussions on the potential censorship of Shakespeare’s *Richard II*, see Blank, Paula. “Speaking Freely about Richard II.” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 96, no. 3, 1997, pp. 327–48; and Clegg, Cyndia Susan. “‘By the Choise and Inuitation of al the Realme’: Richard II and Elizabethan Press Censorship.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 48, no. 4, 1997, pp. 432–48.

was written around 1595, and it is known that the deposition of King Richard, certainly one of the most infamous and scandalous scenes of the Shakespeare canon was missing in earlier versions of the play. Indeed, the play formerly named *The Tragedie of King Richard the second* did not include the deposition scene in either of the first three quartos published in 1597 and 1598.¹⁶³ It was only in the second variant of the fourth quarto published in 1608 that substantial changes to the play were made, notably “with new additions of the Parliament sceane, and the deposing of King Richard, as it hath been lately acted by the Kinges Maiesties seruantes, at the Globe.”¹⁶⁴ The absence of the deposition scene from the earlier quartos coincided with the last decade of Elizabeth’s tumultuous reign. In light of her advanced age and uncertain succession, but especially because of the numerous coups attempted against her regime, one can understand why the deposition scene was highly controversial.¹⁶⁵ The historical parallels and worries about the crown’s succession could not be overlooked, and many had viewed *Richard II*— similarly to Robert Devereaux when he attempted to “put the populace in the mood for a legitimate usurpation,” by re-igniting the buzz around the play—as a political comment on the contemporary state of affairs.¹⁶⁶ Considering Queen Elizabeth’s snarky remark “I am Richard II,

¹⁶³ See Pollard, Alfred W. (Alfred William), 1859-1944. *Shakespeare Folios And Quartos: a Study In the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays, 1594-1685*. London: Methuen and company, 1909.

¹⁶⁴ In fact, the earliest recorded performance of the play was a private one, one year following its writing in 1596. Indeed, the deposition scene might have seen the light of day, albeit in private venues, before its official addition on the title page of the Fourth Quarto of 1608. See Shakespeare, William. *Richard II: The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare*. Edited by John Dover Wilson, 2009; Blank, Paula. “Speaking Freely about Richard II.” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 96, no. 3, 1997, esp. introduction; and A. W. Pollard, *Shakespeare Folios and Quartos: A Study in the Bibliography of Shakespeare's Plays, 1594-1685*, 1909.

¹⁶⁵ See MacCaffrey, Wallace. *Shaping of the Elizabethan Regime. chapter xv the Ridolfi Plot*. Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 399-453; Batho, G. R. “The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.” *The Scottish Historical Review*, vol. 39, no. 127, 1960, pp. 35–42; Tiernan, R. Kent. “Walsingham’s Entrapment of Mary Stuart: The Modern Perspective of a Deception Analyst/Planner.” *American Intelligence Journal*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–56; Smith, Jeremy L. “‘Unlawful Song’: Byrd, the Babington Plot and the Paget Choir.” *Early Music*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2010, pp. 497–508; Andrew, Christopher. *Secret World: A History of Intelligence*. Yale University Press, 2018. Esp. Chapter 10, *Elizabeth I, Walsingham, and the Rise of English Intelligence*, pp. 158-190; Montrose, Louis. “Shakespeare, the Stage, and the State.” *SubStance*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1996, pp. 46–67; and Hammer, Paul E. J. “Shakespeare’s Richard II, the Play of 7 February 1601, and the Essex Rising.” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 59, no. 1, 2008, pp. 1–35.

¹⁶⁶ Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. 2005. Bowker, 239.

know ye not that?” in an interview granted to William Lambarde, her knowledge of the historical parallels of the succession between herself and in *Richard II* is undeniable.¹⁶⁷ The scant evidence as we have for the direct censorship of *Richard II* with respects to the deposition scene is insufficient to ascertain beyond reasonable doubt that Queen Elizabeth or her proxies suppressed the publication of the deposition scene in the first three quartos, however, the timing of its potential censorship indicates otherwise. What we know for certain is that the scene was eventually introduced into the play in the quarto of 1608, shortly after King James I assumed power in 1603, and presumably right after earlier instances censorship were relaxed. The censorship of the deposition scene during Elizabeth’s reign, then, can be explained by two simple reasons. First, during this delicate period, England was a proud and powerful nation, but it was also aware and apprehensive of losing its position in the world. The entire country was on edge because everyone worried— due to the absence of a rightful heir— at the possibility of civil war or usurpation.¹⁶⁸ Also, *Richard II* goes much further than Shakespeare’s usual subtle critiques of society, so much so that the *oblique angle* that typically shrouds the play’s content— the so-called outlet of containment— the mystique that Shakespeare had mastered over the years, was less subtle in this instance.¹⁶⁹ In fact, scholars agree that Shakespeare might have “trespassed beyond the bounds of the permissible.”¹⁷⁰ The infamous excised scene was far more controversial than a dramatization of the rebel Bolingbroke’s quest to restore his status as a

¹⁶⁷ See Orgel, Stephen. “Prologue: I am Richard II.” *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture*, edited by Anna Petrina and Laura Tosi, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 1-14; and Kizelbach, Urszula. ““I am Richard II, Know Ye Not That?”: Queen Elizabeth I and her political role playing. The Pragmatics of Early Modern Politics: Power and Kingship.” *Shakespeare’s History Plays*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2014.

¹⁶⁸ Garber, Marjorie. *Shakespeare After All*. 2005. Bowker, 239

¹⁶⁹ Clare, Janet. “The Censorship of the Deposition Scene in Richard II.” *The Review of English Studies*, vol. XLI, no. 161, Oxford UP, 1990, pp. 89–94.

¹⁷⁰ See Clare, 92.

monarch, it lingered over the King's forced abdication, effectively questioning the monarch's divine right—a notion widely accepted at the time as being both absolute and inviolable.¹⁷¹

In another controversy surrounding Shakespeare's plays, specifically the Falstaff plays, or *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Shakespeare was ordered to rename the most iconic and arguably central persona of the series, Sir John Oldcastle, prior to the publication of *1 Henry IV* in what would have been its first quarto. Indeed, an early performance of *1 Henry IV* in 1597 had created sufficient controversy that Shakespeare had no choice but to rename the comic character now known as Falstaff.¹⁷² The name Sir John Oldcastle was taken as a slight by the Cobham family due to the "buffone" nature of the character.¹⁷³ The Cobham family, known for holding multiple influential positions in Queen Elizabeth's court,¹⁷⁴ regarded the use of "this name for a crass, debauched character as a denigration of their family dignity."¹⁷⁵ According to the records, Shakespeare's playing company was strong armed into changing the name of the said-character prior to the registering each of the plays' first quartos: *1 Henry IV* in February 1598; *2 Henry IV* in 1600; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1602.¹⁷⁶

So, the plays were censored administratively—mainly through the Master of the Revels, the Company of the Stationers, and the Church. By doing so, the State demonstrated its desire to control *public* discourse, and to evade the crown's direct dominion over their content,

¹⁷¹ See Daly, James. "The Idea of Absolute Monarchy in Seventeenth-Century England." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1978, pp. 227–50; Kiryanova, Elena. "Images of Kingship: Charles I, Accession Sermons, and the Theory of Divine Right." *History*, vol. 100, no. 1 (339), 2015, pp. 21–39; Kimmel, Michael S. "the Ambivalence of Absolutism: State and Nobility in 17th century France and England." *Journal of Political & Military Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1986, pp. 55–74.

¹⁷² See Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England*, pp. 77.

¹⁷³ See Pannell, Chris. *The Oxfordian* Vol. 19. 2017 esp. Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England* pp. 69-99.

¹⁷⁴ The incident was further aggravated because Lord Cobham's daughter, Elizabeth, was Robert Cecil's wife. That might have caused both influential families to have taken notice to this offense, see Cutting, 77.

¹⁷⁵ Cutting, 77.

¹⁷⁶ See Dobson, Michael, and Will Sharpe. *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press, 2015, esp. 223-224.

Shakespeare's main mode of evading these constraints came in the form of transposition, mainly achieved by altering character names, settings, and timelines. This allowed him to shield himself from potential retribution from the powers by virtue of plausible deniability. After all, as Bonner Miller Cutting highlights, even the Privy Council realized that ancient history was used to disguise contemporaneous satire, they were however reluctant to take action unless the offense was both obvious and egregious in nature.¹⁷⁷ The popularity of the *Henriad*, a group of plays which is comprised of *Richard II*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *Henry V*, then, was a double-edged sword for the King's Men. The rise in popularity of this relatively new genre—histories—could be said to have been tied to the emergence of English nationalism, and its success was monitored closely by the holders of power.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the histories being set in the United Kingdom and based on real historical figures carried a particular significance for the crown, and an equally significant risk for Shakespeare. Thus, any critique in a Shakespearean History would inevitably be perceived as insolence towards the King himself (e.g., *Richard II*), the ruling elite (e.g., the Falstaff incident), or the Church (e.g., *Richard II* and *Henry VIII*).¹⁷⁹ There was indeed a stark distinction between Histories and all other plays, one that determined how insolent Shakespeare could be: the proximity of a play to its origin, both spatially and temporally.¹⁸⁰ It is known that *Romeo and Juliet* subtly critiques England's aristocracy and Elizabethan values, yet

¹⁷⁷ See Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England*, pp. 76; Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 48-50.

¹⁷⁸ See Montrose, Louis. "Shakespeare, the Stage, and the State." *Sub-Stance*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1996, pp. 46-67; Pannell, Chris. The Oxfordian Vol. 19. 2017 esp. Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England* pp. 70.

¹⁷⁹ See Clare, Janet. "The Censorship of the Deposition Scene in Richard II." *The Review of English Studies*, vol. XLI, no. 161, Oxford UP, 1990, pp. 92; Bonner Miller Cutting's Chapter, *A Sufficient Warrant: Censorship, Punishment, and Shakespeare in Early Modern England* pp. 69-99; and Nichols, Mary P. "Shakespeare's Christian Vision in 'Henry VIII.'" *The Review of Politics*, vol. 76, no. 4, 2014, pp. 537-57.

¹⁸⁰ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, pp. 8; and Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988.

few have explored its potential censorship. The same can be said of all other plays set in various locations and settings such as *The Comedy of Errors*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* set in Greece; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* in Italy; *Love's Labor's Lost* in Spain; *Twelfth Night* in modern day Croatia; *All's Well That Ends Well* in France, *Measure for Measure* in Austria, *Hamlet* in Denmark; *Antony and Cleopatra* in Egypt; *Pericles* set in a variety of places: Lebanon, North Africa, Turkey, Syria, and all around the east and south of the Roman Empire; even *The Tempest*, set in a fictional island. It can be said, then, that the success of Shakespeare's formula for circumventing the censorship of his plays relied on the oblique angle, and in transposing the whole setting, renaming characters, and temporally distancing the plays from reality.¹⁸¹

In contrast to the plays, the publication history of the Sonnets is uncertain. While some of the poems may have already been circulating in the late 1590s¹⁸², Shakespeare's Sonnets were first introduced to the Stationers' Register in a quarto volume on May 20th, 1609.¹⁸³ It is known that the Sonnets were both unpopular and not well received.¹⁸⁴ Though Shakespeare's sonnets did not generally possess properties deemed dangerous to the State, and thus, were not subject to legislative modes of censorship, they were nevertheless predominantly subject to ideological and social censorship, revealing the influence of the overarching culture and society in defining, and

¹⁸¹ See Chiari, Sophie. *Freedom and Censorship in Early Modern English Literature*. Routledge, 2018, esp. 6; Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 18-20; Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England*. University of California Press, 1988, 40-45; Greenblatt, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Freedom*. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2010; and Greenblatt, Stephen. *Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics*. W. W. Norton Et Company, 2019, esp. Introduction.

¹⁸² See Black, Joseph, et al., editors. *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: Concise Edition, Volume A: The Medieval Period - the Renaissance and the Early Seventeenth Century - the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century*. 2016, pp. 880-885.

¹⁸³ See Shakespeare, William. *Shakespeare's Sonnets. Never before Imprinted. A Lovers Complaint. By William Shake-Speare*. 1609, hosted digitally in the archives of the British Library: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/first-edition-of-shakespeares-sonnets-1609>.

¹⁸⁴ See Black et al., 884.

ultimately enforcing the boundaries for acceptable private discourse.¹⁸⁵ In short, the Sonnet genre was not popular, thus the Sonnets were neither what the market was willing to publish, nor what Shakespeare could freely produce. Recognizing this, Shakespeare deliberately crafted his sonnets using codes, metaphors, and semiotic cozenage that only a select few could decipher.¹⁸⁶ The private nature of their consumption allowed for a more intimate and nuanced engagement with the ideas conveyed in the sonnets. Through metaphors and semiotic cozenage, Shakespeare aimed to circumvent the constraints imposed by the contemporary cultural and social norms such as chastity and heteronormative ideals, allowing his work to resonate with those that connected with the sonnets on an intimate level.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, unlike the plays, which were experienced publicly as grand spectacles, the Sonnets were meant for a more intimate setting, where readings and contemplation were not only customary but encouraged.¹⁸⁸ Though the Sonnets, individually, are void of names, settings, and timelines, and by style and form can be read as singular literary works, the procreation Sonnets (1-17) are a great example showcasing that they indeed can be read as a continuous, unraveling narrative.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ See Cousins, A. D. *The Shakespeare Encyclopedia: the Complete Guide to the Man and His Works*. Sweet Water Press, 2014, pp. 282.

¹⁸⁶ See Patterson, Annabel M. *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, p. 19.

¹⁸⁷ See Neely, Carol Thomas. "Detachment and Engagement in Shakespeare's Sonnets: 94, 116, and 129." *PMLA*, vol. 92, no. 1, 1977, pp. 83.

¹⁸⁸ See Hokama, Rhema. "Love's Rites: Performing Prayer in Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 63, no. 2, Oxford UP, 2012, pp. 199–223; Ferry, Anne. *The Inward Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne*. Bowker, 1983; Martz, Louis L. *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century*. Yale University Press, 1962; David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays*. Cambridge University Press, 2002. esp. pp. 1-28.

¹⁸⁹ See Monte, Steven. *The Secret Architecture of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Edinburgh University Press, 2021, esp. chapter 1 "Stories in and about Shakespeare's Sonnets pp. 10-25"; and Crosman, Robert. "Making Love out of Nothing at All: The Issue of Story in Shakespeare's Procreation Sonnets." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 4, 1990, pp. 470–88.

In my study of the Sonnets, I have come to the conclusion that the first 20 poems are full of evidence of *idioglossia* worth exploring.¹⁹⁰ Shakespeare's approach to subverting censorship in the Sonnets, then, is one of craftsmanship and secrecy. The procreation Sonnets¹⁹¹ seem to be an address, urging the 'Fair Youth' to marry and have children. From the first poem "we desire increase,"¹⁹² (1.1) the speaker foreshadows the rest of the procreation sequence, when he reflects the prevailing beliefs of his time regarding the so-called noble endeavor, and importance of procreation.¹⁹³ At first glance, these sonnets explore the moral obligations of procreation, weaponizing compelling and widely accepted arguments of the time. Sonnet 4 addresses the Fair Youth through a barrage of questions: "Why dost thou spend upon thyself thy beauty's legacy? // Why dost thou abuse The bounteous largess given thee to give? // Why dost thou use So great a sum of sums yet canst not live? // Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee"¹⁹⁴ (4.2-6-8-13). The speaker lectures the young man about nature, legacy, and his duty in the world, urging him to selflessly perpetuate both nature and his legacy through procreation. In Sonnet 9 the speaker turns his argument upside down. Though the speaker's goal remains unaltered—convincing the young man to procreate—the argument shifts from urging the Fair Youth to selflessly sacrifice for the greater good of nature, to selfishly ensure an heir to his unfathomable beauty: "Look what an unthrift in the world doth spend shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it // But beauty's

¹⁹⁰ See Dubrow, Heather. "Incertainties Now Crown Themselves Assur'd': The Politics of Plotting Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1996, pp. 291.

¹⁹¹ The classification of the procreation sonnets is generally agreed by most scholars to be Shakespeare's 1-17. However, in this chapter, the procreation sonnets will be referred to as sonnets 1-20. As a technical detail, the inclusion of the subsequent three poems into the procreation sequence was made to provide additional context to the overarching story in the poems. The addition of these sonnets into the sequence offers both a conclusion to the sequence, and a point of heightened emphasis.

¹⁹² See Burrow, Colin, editor. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 383.

¹⁹³ See Craig, Hardin. "Shakespeare and Wilson's 'Arte of Rhetorique,' an Inquiry into the Criteria for Determining Sources." *Studies in Philology*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1931, pp. 618-30 for a discussion about Wilson's influence on Shakespeare, specifically on the influence that Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* may have had on the procreation sequence. Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, edited by G.H MAIR. 1560, Oxford UP. MCMIX.

¹⁹⁴ See Burrow, 389.

waste hath in the world an end, and kept unused the user so destroys it // No love towards others in that bosom sits that on himself such murd'rous shame commits"¹⁹⁵ (9.9-10-11-12-13-14); finally, in sonnet 13, the speaker concludes that immortality may be the addressee's if he were to spread his genes, extending his "lease" through "sweet issue" (13.5-8).¹⁹⁶

On the whole, one can notice in the procreation sequence an intense buildup and increase in intimacy starting in the earlier sonnets of the sequence and ultimately reaching its point of maximum tension in Sonnet 20. The increase in intimacy between the speaker and the addressee is most apparent by the speaker's progressive increase in using the first and second-person pronouns. In Sonnet 10, when the speaker urges the addressee to "change thy thought" (about reproduction), for "I (the speaker) may change my mind," this marks the first instance of the first-person pronoun appearing in the collection of sonnets.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, "O that you were yourself" (13.1) which is uttered in sonnet 13 is also the first sonnet to address the Fair Youth as 'you' rather than 'thou' and 'yourself' rather than 'thysself'.¹⁹⁸ These subtle shifts mark a gradual increase in intimacy between the poet-speaker and the addressee¹⁹⁹; a sense of intimacy further heightened as the speaker opens sonnet 18 with a question: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (18.1).²⁰⁰

There are two things seemingly at play in this poem.²⁰¹ First— the 'I'— the consistent use of the first-person pronoun has been assumed entirely; once intimacy is achieved, it remains and only grows stronger as the sequence progresses, exemplified by the speaker's growing boldness

¹⁹⁵ See Burrow, Colin, editor. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 399.

¹⁹⁶ See Burrow, 407.

¹⁹⁷ See Burrow, 401.

¹⁹⁸ See Burrow, 407.

¹⁹⁹ See Burrow, 406.

²⁰⁰ See Burrow, 417.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

in openly addressing the Fair Youth through the question “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” (18.1).²⁰² Sonnet 18 also foreshadows the strongest and most passionate poem of the sequence, Sonnet 20. The speaker compares the Fair Youth to a summer’s day, “thou art more lovely and more temperate,” (18.1) in a preamble to sonnet 20 when the comparison shifts from an immaterial season— a point in time, i.e., a summer’s day— to a woman, the opposite gender “A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted” (20.1).²⁰³ The flirtatious suggestiveness of sonnet 20 is veiled by broad poetic winks, and so-called poetic innuendos. Though there is, indeed, an abundance of references of homoerotic desire in the sonnets, such depictions are never presented at face-value, rather, they are uniquely perceptible through Shakespeare’s oblique angle. At a lexical level, the underlying logical apparatus at play in this poem is one of addition by subtraction. The poet-speaker only grants the Fair Youth what he has subtracted from women, effectively molding an improved woman though in the image of a man, for what the speaker supposedly likes of the young man are nothing but feminine attributes: “A woman’s face // A woman’s gentle heart // an eye more bright than theirs” (20.1-3-5).²⁰⁴ Again, as to be shielded by virtue of plausible deniability, Shakespeare evades the potential censorship of this poem by not addressing a man, but a woman “not acquainted”— an obvious pun on the word *quaint*, which signified the female genitalia.²⁰⁵ At a prosodical level, when the poet-speaker addresses the Fair Youth, he disrupts the structure of the poem for the first and only time in the sequence by introducing feminine endings.²⁰⁶ In lines 12 and 14, Shakespeare’s usual iambic pentameter is broken: “By add / ing one / thing to / my pur / pose no / thing // Mine be / thy love / and thy /

²⁰² See Burrow, Colin, editor. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 417.

²⁰³ See Burrow, 417; 421.

²⁰⁴ See Burrow, 421.

²⁰⁵ Mahony, Patrick. “Shakespeare’s Sonnet Number 20: Its Symbolic Gestalt.” *American Imago*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1979, esp. 70.

²⁰⁶ See Mahony, 77.

love's use / their trea / sure" (20.12-14).²⁰⁷ This device feminizes both the poem, and the addressee through the insertion of unstressed extra-metrical syllables at the end of each line, further obscuring the "master (or) mistress" (20.2) of the speaker's "passion".

Shakespeareans seem to agree, indeed, that "so much depends on Sonnet 20."²⁰⁸ Not only is the poem central to the analyzed sequence, but it is also a pivotal point to our understanding of the underlying narratives within the sonnets themselves. It is known that the Sonnets' reception has an extensive history of homophobia, and Shakespeare was better served operating within the realm of plausible deniability.²⁰⁹ As many have argued, before the twentieth century, responses to the sonnets have been in the vast majority of cases homophobic²¹⁰, and same-sex relations in the Renaissance were seen in the social and political tradition as being monstrous.²¹¹ Thus, Shakespeare removes sexuality from sonnet 20 and makes it about love, obfuscating the certain connection between sexuality and social conventions.²¹² As one nineteenth-century commentator remarked, sonnet 20 "is a truly disagreeable enigma. *If* (my emphasis) I have caught any glimpse of the real meaning, I could heartily wish that Shakespeare had never written it."²¹³ The homoeroticism of the sonnets, and their difficulty of engagement have been suggested as reasons for their lack of success up until the twentieth century. Indeed, in their own time, the sonnets were scandalous,²¹⁴ and even a century after their initial publication, agents sought to erase the

²⁰⁷ See Burrow, Colin, editor. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*. Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 417.

²⁰⁸ See Distiller, Natasha. "Shakespeare's Perversion: A Reading of Sonnet 20." *Shakespeare*, vol. 8, no. 2, Informa UK Limited, June 2012, pp. 142.

²⁰⁹ See Bruce Smith. *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* University of Chicago Press, 1994.

²¹⁰ See Robert Matz. "The Scandals of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *ELH*, vol. 77, no. 2, Project MUSE, 2010, pp. 477–508, esp. pp. 478; and Peter Stallybrass, "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Modern Language Quarterly* 54, 1993.

²¹¹ Burrow, 127.

²¹² See Matz, Robert. *The World of Shakespeare's Sonnets: The Literary Life of the World's Most Famous Love Poetry*. 2007, esp. introduction.

²¹³ See Distiller, Natasha. "Shakespeare's Perversion: A Reading of Sonnet 20." *Shakespeare*, vol. 8, no. 2, Informa UK Limited, June 2012, pp. 138.

²¹⁴ See Robert Matz. "The Scandals of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *ELH*, vol. 77, no. 2, Project Muse, 2010, pp. 480.

sonnets' 'faults', as Shakespeareans have intuited over the years that the procreation sonnets (1-20) "often deflect erotic interpretation by concealing gender."²¹⁵ One such example being Bernard Lintott's 1711 collection of poems and edition of the sonnets titled *One Hundred and Fifty-Four Sonnets, all of them* (my emphasis) *in Praise of his Mistress*.²¹⁶ The evidence as to the specific transgressions committed in the sonnets specifically is dubious, however, what we know for certain is that societal norms enforced policing of any form of sexuality outside of marriage, and sometimes even within marriage.²¹⁷ After all, "celibacy was upheld as the ideal behavior to be emulated, not only by priests and nuns, but by the whole community,"²¹⁸ thus the sonnets certainly violated the societal norms and cultural expectations associated with chastity, and potentially provoked controversy due to their polarizing homoerotic content.²¹⁹ Shakespeare, aware of these restrictions, employed a poetic language rich in semiotic cozenage, allowing him to mask lust through procreation, and conceal homoerotic desires behind the face of a woman.

In short, Shakespeare's modes of writing to avoid censorship evolved to evade both bureaucratic attempts to thwart *public* discourse, as well as ideological and societal attacks on *private* discourse. It could be said, then, that censorship directly played a significant role in shaping both Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, albeit in different ways. The plays faced a robust and extensive screening process, spearheaded by the Master of the Revels and the Company of

²¹⁵ See Dubrow, Heather. "Uncertainties Now Crown Themselves Assur'd": The Politics of Plotting Shakespeare's Sonnets." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 3, Oxford UP, 1996, p. 292.

²¹⁶ See A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets (Vols. 24-25), ed. Hyder Rollins, 2 vol. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1944).

²¹⁷ See Robert Matz. "The Scandals of Shakespeare's Sonnets." *ELH*, vol. 77, no. 2, Project Muse, 2010, pp. 481; and Gregory W. Bredbeck, *Sodomy and Interpretation: Marlowe to Milton* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1991), 167-80.

²¹⁸ See Rose, Mary Beth. *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*. Cornell University Press, 2018, 15.

²¹⁹ See Robert Matz, 484; and Paul Hammond, *Figuring Sex from Shakespeare to Rochester*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002. esp. pp. 82-86. Indeed, critics suggest that it is not surprising that the homoeroticism of the sonnets is suggested to have been a reason for their lack of success in their own day.

the Stationers. To evade constraints from either State, church, or influential persons of authority, Shakespeare mainly employed transposition, and altered character names and timelines. On the other hand, reflecting the influence of the overarching culture and society, the censorship of the sonnets preceded that of the State, which was uninterested, for the most part, in censoring less popular works. Due to the private nature of the sonnets' consumption, and in response to their censorship, Shakespeare crafted the poems using codes, metaphors, and *double-entendres* which transcended the imposed social and ideological boundaries on private expression. This allowed the reader a more intimate engagement with Shakespeare's true artistic expression on the one hand, whilst securing an avenue for plausible deniability on the other. Thus, Shakespeare adapted his methods to better circumvent the specific censoring mechanisms at play. These adaptable strategies enabled him to navigate the constraints imposed by different forms of censorship and to ultimately express his ideas in ways that transcended social, cultural, and state limitations, all whilst maintaining artistic integrity.

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