

ABSTRACT

The temporality of queerness, as laid out by Ezra Horbury, allows for us as scholars to investigate characters in the plays of the early modern period's potential for queer performance. In this thesis, I will apply this temporality on three characters from the era: Ariel from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Puck from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Snap/Alathe from Fletcher and Shirley's *The Night Walker*. My thesis, "And All *His* Quality": Gender Subversion Through Mischief and Magic, seeks to prove the nonbinary and androgynous potential of these characters in the literary, performative personification and imagination to challenge the way we conceptualize gender in the mystical characters of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Furthermore, this thesis aims to continually call for a shift in modern casting and theatrical practices to allow for more moments of gender-ambiguous performance. As such, this thesis will discuss the characters listed above in connection to the queerness of early modern childhood, the period's understanding of hermaphroditism (intersexism) and androgyny, the homoerotic tendencies of the master/apprentice relationship, and the utilization of echo as imitation.

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Introduction: Where it All Began

The foundational element in any theatrical experience is the sense of play, whether it is the actors playing with their version of a 400-year-old character or the playwright playing with language and rhetoric to tell a compelling story meant to be enacted. This commonality of the foundation is what connects theatrical experiences and often generates a conversation or interrogation of socio-cultural topics in a semi-closed public space. This engagement in socio-cultural topics means that playwrights and players, just as in Shakespeare's day, are constantly engaging in a conversation between the physical embodiment of a character and all of the cultural connections and threads attached to said character. This ongoing conversation and play are complicated further when greeted with representations of potential indeterminacy in terms of both gender and sexuality. As a nonbinary, gender-fluid actor, a more in-depth and profound conversation about queer representation on both the early modern and contemporary stage needs to take place. In their writing, Judith Butler regards gender as an act of performance in conversation with the various ways an actor could enact a character; therefore, every performance is specific with gendered attributes that the actor takes on to realize the character entirely (Butler 519).

For me, it is vital to look for places in literature and art where gender variance could appear, both as an opportunity to play within the boundaries of my gender expression and as an acknowledgment that androgynous characters appear in all forms of media. Any character can and should be viewed through gender as performance and in conversation with potential sexual or gender indeterminacy or deviation. During my first year of graduate school in the Shakespeare and Performance program, I had the opportunity to perform in four final scene performances for the Fall Semester Directing Showcase. In three of the four scenes, I was cast as (in no particular

order) Witch #3 from *Macbeth*, Ariel from *The Tempest*, and Puck from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. I located an opportunity in the performance of these characters for gender ambiguity. In my work as Puck, both in director Pete Sheldon's final and problem scene, I chose to wear a combination of a long purple skirt and a black tank top to represent, at least in terms of costuming, a sense of gender instability within the role. I was also inherently interested in how Puck, in the world of the play, uses their magic to mess around with the other characters while remaining in service to the fairy king, Oberon. This enacted performance utilized all levels of my body and was inspired by an inherent sense of curiosity and child-like energy that is often natural within interpretations of the character. For director Paige Hilton's problem and final scene, my version of Ariel was also inspired by childish curiosity. I was often staged on the sidelines, invested in the actions in front of me. My costume was also equipped with a skirt; however, this time, it was white, and the other elements of my costume were both white and relatively flowy in connection to representations of Ariel as potentially angelic. After all, they are a spirit, so this choice makes sense. My version of the spirit existed primarily in the uppermost level of my body as their journey through the play is in direct service to Prospero and the specific calmness represented in their journey to eventual freedom, their ultimate goal. The weird sisters in *Macbeth* are also an exciting place to interrogate gender and performativity. However, their literary representation and dramatic interpretations are more in conversation with the more effeminate practice of witchcraft as they appear in folklore and in the cultural consciousness of the time; so, though gender indeterminacy exists textually here, this specific embodied performance is outside the grand scope of what this thesis is trying to uncover.

I found in my embodiment of the two ethereal characters, Puck and Ariel, while mainly in my levels and speed exhibited by the characters, how their magical mischief coincided with

their androgynous potential in gendered performance. That is where this thesis project was born. These magical characters of Shakespeare and their representation in both text and performance can challenge, subvert, and even reimagine gendered performance in an androgynous way; both with the actor you choose to cast as these characters and how said actor chooses to embody them. Scholars including Frances Timbers, Victoria Bladen, and Yan Brailowsky have identified that magic on the stage “reinforced gender ideologies” while at the same time offering opportunities to challenge and subvert existing gendered ideologies constructed by the social norms of ritual magical practice (Timbers, 2-3).

This thesis investigates the potential within early modern theatre to challenge and subvert gender with representations of magic, whether textually called for or theatrically experienced by characters as literary fairies and actors in gender-ambiguous performances. Similarly, I will reflect on how gender as an act of performance with subversions through mischief and magic relates to the inherent queerness of early modern childhood, the literary domestication of the fairy, the homosocial relationship of the master and their apprentice, and the early moderns’ understanding of androgyny and hermaphroditism. In this thesis, I will highlight the similarities between representations of fairies and the concept of androgyny and hermaphroditism in the literary and performative personification and imagination to challenge how we conceptualize gender in the mystical characters of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. This investigation will do several things: 1) it will allow for characters with potentially queer origins to come into focus in conversations surrounding contemporary theatrical practices; 2) it will prove that conversations surrounding gender identity and the differentiation between sex and gender have been going on long before and long after Shakespeare. It is ever so critical to continue such

conversations in the political climate of the 2020s, where the LGBTQ+ community as a whole has experienced a heightening of violence and discrimination.

Chapter #1 of this thesis will begin with a general understanding of the terms that will show up throughout this thesis and how I choose to engage with them under the lens of queer theory both in our modern knowledge and an early modern understanding. From there, the discussions will shift to investigating the relative queerness of early modern childhood and the relationship between such and servanthood/apprenticeship. Lastly, the chapter will cover how each previous discussion could show up in the physical embodiment of characters like Puck and Ariel to show the androgynous potential in their performance. From there, Chapter #2 will expound upon the arguments and discussions in Chapter #1 with another textual and performative version of Ariel, continual choices for Puck, and similarities in both their function within the play and how gender ambiguity can show up concerning a different, human, early modern character known as Snap/Alathe from John Fletcher and James Shirley's *The Night-Walker*. Through these case study characters, I aim to show the potential for gender ambiguity in performance based on their personal experiences with self-fashioning and their connection to the above queer concepts of the master and apprentice, early modern childhood, the understanding of androgyny and hermaphroditism, and lastly, the use of echo as imitation.

Chapter #1: Theoretical Framework

Beginning Concepts

First, to begin the journey into gender ambiguity, I will establish the base rules while working with queer theory concerning the trans/nonbinary experience. Overall, the goal of this approach is to engage with the texts of the period that allow trans undertones to emerge while, at the same time, allowing said literature to exist within the world it was created for. Simone Chess, Colby Gordon, and Will Fisher are leading scholars in this field and provide a framework for approaching and understanding queer studies and its relation to early modern criticism. In other words, “early modern trans studies do not aim to replace or supersede historicist or archival work, but rather to embrace a capacious set of approaches to understanding the prehistories of transgender embodiment” (Chess et al. 4). This kind of approach engages what is understood by this specific field of critical theory as a temporality. A “temporality” is a specific unhistoricist way of looking at and discussing characters and concepts from the early modern period through a specific critical lens while leaving room for all previous archival scholarship and research to exist simultaneously as well as contemporary thoughts and criticism at the time the plays were first performed. As scholars, we can use temporalities to draw connections between an early modern and contemporary understanding. With that, Chess et al. point out, “if early modern trans studies help us read familiar texts and characters in newly complex ways, it also opens inroads for reassessing familiar historical figures and types” (7). This reassessment of familiar gendered archetypes forces a more profound conversation regarding how a production could use a specific gender representation to tell a particular story. For this thesis, the temporality examined here is one of *potential* queerness.

As a nonbinary scholar, Butler's work on gender performativity plays a heavy role in understanding the difference between specified gendered performances and unspecified ones. They point out that "whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed; hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed sex," touching on how the socially constructed concept of gender and how it is in relation to biological sex rather than fully adhered to it (8). Gender, then, is influenced by all aspects of our daily activity and shaped by social interactions or other areas of daily performance. I think there is room here as well for being confident in one's sexual or gender identity while also acknowledging gender as the apparatus of the sexed body. With that, there is plenty of room for how the actor chooses to embody socially gendered attributes inspired by the given sex of the actor. However, it is essential to understand each of them as a different concept.

In my experience as a nonbinary, genderfluid person who was born male, I have noticed a lot of my newfound gender expression is inspired by the body that I was given as well as the body that I have been working hard over the past four years to maintain as I used to exist in a plus-sized body. I have a toned muscular body at this point in that journey. Most would align this physical trait with a more masculine body and, therefore, a more masculine presenting or performed identity. This is not to say that having a muscular body makes you more masculine or male, as all bodies have the potential to be muscular. However, one of the ways I challenge gendered norms with my body is the juxtaposition of the toned body with long hair. Similarly, on days when I am explicitly feeling more feminine, the outfit I wear or how I choose to embody an androgynous performance on a given day does not diminish my body's physical presence but adds to it. I am allowed to use the physical presence of my more masculine body and how it takes up space in the type of clothing I wear to inspire my daily engagement in the performance

of gender. This daily reproduction of gender, then, is directly inspired by my self-fashioning and how I choose to take up space in my self-fashioning combined with an assortment of culturally gendered gestures to realize how I wish to express myself.

In drag, for example, the costume is only half the work. The man's job in the dress is to embody a specific attitude and almost caricatured versions of femininity to get their heightened gendered performance across. However, as Butler states, "the presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it" (9). I do agree restricting gender performance to a binary one limits the experience the gender apparatus can have on the sexed body. Again, there is a relationship between sex and gender; however, the separation of the two must be understood to realize the human experience fully. Similarly, Butler explains that "it would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex if sex itself is a gendered category...gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established" (10). With gender then functioning as an apparatus placed on a sexed body, there needs to be a foundational understanding of biological sex and what determines it for the apparatus of gender itself to be socially informed.

This read on embodiment is critical to engage with but also essential to be as specific as possible. There is no set way to articulate or enact a gendered performance because there is no such thing as one human body. With that, there are a myriad of socially acceptable gestures and actions that signify masculine and feminine, and there is not one way to perform gender, either. Therefore, the act and embodiment of gender as an act of performance is in conversation with the physically sexed body of the actor. Human beings come in all shapes and sizes; therefore, the apparatus of gender performance is different for everyone. Race also begins to play a factor in

the gender apparatus as well with various sets of expectations placed in the performativity of black maleness rather than white maleness, for example. Allowing gender to take up the space of performative action for an actor should then enable the creation of the action to be inspired by gesture and desire localized within the “self” of the actor. Once the act can be located, the gender performance becomes brief and meaningful, specifically for the moment in the play being created as well.

I am reminded of my colleague Cory Drozdowski’s performance as Queen Margaret in 2 *Henry VI* this spring for the 2023-24 2nd Year Showcase. Though Drozdowski is a very male presenting actor with a full beard, he used his understanding of his gender identity with the help of costume, makeup, and careful embodiment of gender to make the character his own, allowing space for him/themselves to be queen. The audience was fully aware of the male body under the corset, mainly since Drozdowski chose to keep their beard in the role; however, that did not impact the realized performance of his Margaret from being anything other than the Queen of England and being interpreted as such.

Butler continues to assert, “if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that gender can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (186). If gender is neither true nor false, can identity be primary or stable? Gender expression and deviation from the prescribed sexual and gendered norms, to me and in many cases, is born from a place of instability that is looking for stability. Gesturing to my own experience with gender instability and fluidity, I may be inspired to present one way at the start of the day and wish to present entirely different by the end of the day. By allowing myself to be aware of this instability within my expression, I can stabilize it by listening and reacting to how

it wants to be expressed. The act of performing gender, especially in the case of theatrical performance, has to be specific and stylized for several reasons. Firstly, and true for most plays or musicals, there is an inherent heightening of gendered performance as performing in front of the audience requires some level of exaggeration to separate the world of the play from the real world outside the playhouse. Secondly, and in tandem with point one, there is often a juxtaposition between the gender of the character and the actor portraying them, which requires the actor to consistently remind the audience of the gendered performance of that character. Thirdly, no person can accurately represent and recreate the gender expression of another person. Therefore, they must enact a stylized performance that is their own to make the character come alive again.

Butler importantly touches on the fact that every day is a repetition of the performative identity of one's self, explaining that "if the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style" (520). However, from this point, I think that wherever the gendered performances are the most unstable is the location of the possibility of different repeatable performatives and subversive gendered discoveries. With that, I argue the act is successful when the actor's willingness to engage in and express a potentially subversive gender performance and the audience's interpretation and understanding of the gendered performance through the lens of socio-cultural significance combine. To continue, there comes the required adherence to the gendered performance by your fellow actors, who also enact their gendered performances for the world of the play presented to be fully functional, though ephemeral. This constant repetition is a reminder of the culturally

established understanding of gender. Still, it is up to the individual actor to realize that the performance of the gendered character is their version of repetition. From there, the actor can play around with and subvert their character's gender expression with their understanding and performance. Butler asserts the public nature of performative gender as the stylized performance of gender and how it is inherently meant to be viewed and commented on (526). From there, a possible relationship between the character and the audience is inspired by the public reaction and collective acceptance of the performance taking place for the plot to gain any traction as it relates to the overall suspension of reality taking place in any theatrical production.

Additionally, Butler also points out that "if the 'reality' of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized 'sex' or 'gender' which gender performances ostensibly express" (527). Each gendered performance is enacted as the actor's understanding of their character and as a separate performance every time the character is embodied; it is newly living each time. It requires understanding the reality of the play and life outside of the theatre, the individuality of gender performance, and how it is related to but not fully connected to an essential or unrealized sex or gender. Therefore, the expression that can be found within the performativity of gender allows for the creation of a gendered reality that exists solely in response to the world of the play and the performative subversions being utilized. To continue, the reality of the performance only lasts as long as the performance itself. Once the play is over, the reality of that performance for that day has concluded, and the gendered embodiment of the character rests until it is revived for a new repeated performance the next time it is enacted.

Now that a basic understanding of gender as an act of performance has been established, for this thesis, it is also essential to understand how variations of gendered performatives,

especially those of undetermined gender performance, function in conversation with (or in opposition to) the concept of masculinity as a whole. Scholar Micheal Mangan's work with *Staging Masculinities* is an entry point, as the figures I have identified within the temporality of queerness exist alongside a masculine character as well as a heteronormative marital union. From his research, Mangan states that gender is the explanation of relationships and the general relationship between the various categories of masculine and feminine performativity (9). He is specific in framing his study around masculinity as “‘the masculine,’ of course, may be characterized as ‘that which is not womanly.’ It may also, however, be defined in relation to other kinds of ‘non-masculinity’” (9). The performative nature of masculinity as we function in a world that is hierarchically set up to support the cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, white man is specifically designed to separate itself from its other. What it means to be a man is only significant to what it means not to be a man. The separation of what is considered masculine and non-masculine (or unmasculine as Mangan states) leaves room for what I consider hyper-masculinity: an overactive performance of gender that seeks to place itself as far away from what is culturally understood as unmasculine as possible. This stems from the need for masculinity to set itself apart from its “other” and how the other can be excluded. The exclusion of the “other” concerning masculine performance is important for the perpetuation of the patriarchal social hierarchy. In any situation, there is an understanding of the potential privilege that one character might have over another. This privilege, whether inspired or constructed by a gendered performance, is a reaction to character status and their positioning with and to their “other.”

In aligning itself with the hierarchical privileges of society, “masculinity, then, repeatedly defines itself in terms of its opposites, and the history of gender construction is, as often as not, a

matter of marking off the ‘other’...the other comes back to haunt the dominant order which had dispelled it... continual interplay arises between the thing itself and the other against which it is being defined” (10). The interplay Mangan mentions is essential because of how often masculinity takes its place apart from whatever is labeled as “other.” This constant interrogation and interplay between this gendered classification is critical when the subversion of gender ideology is present, and the “masculine” body present in the story has to combat it in some way. With this comes a “shopping list” of socio-cultural norms that those who attach themselves to masculinity uphold in their daily performance (209). The layers of performativity that social masculinity feels the need to adhere to require a level of accordance that is impossible to achieve even by the hyper-masculine. Any performance or embodiment of masculinity is aware of the prescribed attributes regardless of the repeatability of their enacted performance or everyday social performance. The same is true in the opposite direction, as there is also an unspoken and unconscious “shopping list” of gender requirements for femininity. The difference between the two is that femininity is often first distinguished by *opposing* the masculine, while masculinity is more distinguished by what it *is*. With the various cultural layers involved in the construction of gender for both daily life and performance, and since there is no such thing as one human body or gendered experience, there is no one way to enact the same gendered performance as someone else, making every daily and theatrical performance individual and stylized for the means of that performance’s reality.

Now that an understanding of gender as performance (and specifically concerning unmasculinity) has been established, we can shift our attention to an early modern understanding of gender and the ambiguity that is inherent to it. When using our contemporary knowledge of the sex and gender spectrum in conversation with an era that did not possess the same language

and terms surrounding it, we have to understand the gender variant of the period to understand how the concepts from the period “continue to shape – or might reshape – the present” (Chess et al. 3). From this, one should take great care when using outdated and potentially harmful language alongside modern terminology to explain certain concepts. At this juncture, this thesis will dive into a deeper understanding of the relationship between our modern sensibilities and the early modern sensibilities of gender variation to bring said concepts into conversation with the characters I have flagged under the temporality of queerness.

Androgyne vs. Hermaphrodite

One of the terms for gender variation in the early modern period is the outdated term “hermaphrodite.” The *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* defines the term as “a person, or an animal...having external or internal sexual organs that are not male or female, which are a combination of the typical male and female organs, or that do not correspond to the individual's chromosomal sex” (1a). When applied to humans, the modern-day and less offensive equivalent to this outdated term would be “intersex.” With that, I also wish to draw attention to the second definition that the *OED* gives. This definition identifies a hermaphrodite as “a person of one sex who behaves in a way regarded as characteristic of the other sex; a person who does not conform to traditional notions of gender” (1b). Both definitions are essential to this thesis because of the connection between the physical reality of the potentially intersexed body and one’s self-fashioning of gender based on societal influences. This deduction is necessary because any body has the potential to be an intersexed body, as the visual identifiers of which are invisible to the public eye. Similarly, as I unpack more thoroughly below, these definitions connect to the

early modern understanding of the physical reality of hermaphroditism and the idealized impossibility of “true” androgyny.

Ruth Gilbert and her work on *Early Modern Hermaphrodites* provides a clear insight into how early modern culture understood the term and how it was utilized to challenge social norms. As her book's introduction and first chapter explain, there were so many classifications of what a hermaphrodite was to social life that it was complicated to solidify a definition encompassing each societal categorization. Gilbert claims that “above all, hermaphroditism generated stories about sex, gender and sexuality. But hermaphroditism also told other, less obvious stories: about order, knowledge, nature, and culture; about what it meant to be an outsider and what it meant to be human” (1). I find it very compelling that playwrights and other writers of the period would often include hermaphroditic characters to interrogate sexuality and gender performance while simultaneously pairing their stories with those of hetero-social/normative relationships and other tales of order knowledge and nature. Some characters that scholars have flagged as potentially hermaphroditic in early modern theatre include but are not limited to, Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*, as well as Phillida and Galatea in John Lyly's *Galatea*. To continue, contemporary conversations surround the trans potential of Rosalind/Ganymede in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and Viola/Cesario in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Though these specific characters are outside the scope of this thesis, there was an awareness of the importance of these stories being told together as they are representations of the culture of the time. These depictions of potentially hermaphroditic/trans characters on stage also allow the audience to interrogate their understanding and comfortability with gender variance having the same amount of agency, potentially alongside their heteronormative counterpart.

Gilbert continues by noting, “in exploring the cultural codes that shaped representations of, and attitudes towards, sexual indeterminacy, the book argues that sexual ambiguity, whether embodied or enacted, anatomical or erotic, has always generated confused responses” (3). Anything that is given the freedom of expression within a public setting should force the audience, whether intended or unintended, to think critically about the enactment or embodiment of sexual and gender indeterminacy. Didactic authors were aware of the public reactions and discomfort with gender ambiguity. They, therefore, would frequently use such figures, or versions of such, in their plays for a specific kind of audience reaction. As reactions were mixed, the understanding of the concept of hermaphroditism was often conflated with transvestitism and the sin of sodomy. Gilbert states that “the hermaphrodite was variously figured as a god, a monster, a marvel, a monarch, a man, a woman, a transvestite, a sodomite...[it] was a sign that was used connotatively as well as denotatively. And, as an idea and an image, it was always subject to a variety of representations” (9). It makes sense that the idea and image of hermaphroditism mimic the societal understanding of it under various representations. Each version of hermaphroditic variation must be interrogated differently as an example of something similar but different simultaneously. Gilbert also asserts a link between hermaphrodite and androgynous character portrayals and the similarities the depictions share with Ovidian myth, something a number of the public might be aware of (10). I will not dive too deep into Ovid since Shakespeare and his contemporaries pulled from multiple transmutation stories from him for inspiration for their works. However, there is one specific Ovidian myth that I want to discuss, and that is the myth of Echo and Narcissus.

Antonis Chaliakopoulos from *The Collector* explains, “‘Echo and Narcissus’ story is a tale about the power of love, a kind of love so powerful that it can turn into an obsession”

(Chalaikopoulos). In summary, this myth is about how Echo, whom Hera cursed, can only repeat the last word she hears, and her rejection from Narcissus hurts her so bad that she hides away in the woods forever until she is nothing but her voice and her bones. From this general understanding, scholar Susan Anderson does excellent work on *Echo and Meaning on Early Modern English Stages*, which seems relevant to my larger argument. Anderson explains, “echo effects on stage enhance the listener's pleasure even as echo, on a broader level, operates as a creative and structural principle within literary works. Echo is imitative, but it can also modify the meaning of the sounds it imitates” (2). Echo as sound and music is evident in Anderson's work as echo variations in music, like call and response, are tangible even in today's musical landscape. This understanding of echo as imitation concerning the myth is essential to focus on as the three characters I cover in this thesis, Ariel, Puck, and Snap/Alathe from John Fletcher's *The Night-Walker*, enact their version of echo as imitation in the mischief they created. Anderson also points out that “writers of the texts discussed [in the longer book] all draw on pre-existing stories, including that of Echo herself, as well as other tropes and characteristics to combine and recombine in the manner of a kaleidoscope, creating infinite variations made up of the same recognizable material” (3). Though my specific plays of focus do not enter the conversation in Anderson's book, the utilization of the concept stands out as the use of echo becomes more and more popular. As the use and function of echo are so tied to Echo herself, there comes a general understanding of echo as a potentially feminine concept and quality. With that, and how I use the idea, echo can also recall the past in the present situation, which I will explain later.

Another term the early modern era may have been familiar with is androgyne. The *OED* also provides several valuable definitions for understanding what this term means for the early modern context as with our modern one. The first definition states that an androgyne is “n. a

person who or animal which is physically both male and female, typically in having both male and female sexual organs; a hermaphrodite. Also (now usually in mythological contexts): the original form of human, supposed to exist before the division of humanity into sexes and to encompass the nature and characteristics of both sexes” (Sense 1a). I like this definition a lot because it gestures towards a later conversation about the intrinsic link between representations of hermaphroditism collated with representations of androgyny, the opposite ends of the same spectrum. The first half of the definition points to the physical reality of the hermaphrodite, while the second half is more in line with the idealized vision of human wholeness. The second definition the *OED* provides identifies the androgyne as:

n. Originally (*depreciative*): a man whose behaviour, demeanour, or appearance is considered to be unmasculine or to have qualities or characteristics traditionally or stereotypically associated with women; (later also) a woman who is considered to be unfeminine or masculine in some way. Now usually in positive or neutral use: a person who is neither clearly male nor female, or who combines elements of masculinity and femininity; an androgynous person (Sense 1b).

The first half of this definition is intriguing because the “depreciative” aspect touches on the concept of public interpretation and reaction to the conceptual and physical reality of androgyny while also setting the figure as a whole apart from masculinity as a directly explicit other. The second half of this definition also speaks to topics this thesis has already covered in the specific othering of the female androgyne/hermaphrodite and how that figure is similar to but sometimes outcast from the larger category of gender indeterminacy; secondly, establishing the more modern sense of gender ambiguity where the figure does not identify as male or female.

Nowadays, as the second definition suggests, we use the term “androgynous” when referring to ambiguous gender presentation, among other terms, in conversation with the figure’s sexual identity. Robert Kimbrough is one of the first people to engage with this term and conversations about gender both in the early modern context and his context of the early 1990s. Granted, the 1970s and 1980s were a time when there was a boom of both queerness in terms of a relative public acceptance and open practice of homosexuality and gender fluidity as well as anti-queerness of specific groups of people (much like today’s current political climate) being openly against the pride of identity. However, this rise in public queerness is juxtaposed by the responses to the AIDS epidemic in the 80s/90s and other issues of moral panic. This makes Kimbrough’s study pivotal to our current understanding of the concept.

He provides several definitions of androgyny; most, if not all, begin an exciting conversation about one’s wholeness. However, no matter how much work is done to break down the binary, androgyny is still rooted in the binary social hierarchy of the patriarchy, placing male (*andro*) before female (*gyne*) (5). Kimbrough first claims that “androgyny may be defined as fully realized humanity. Because this is a state of mind rarely attained and, when achieved, nearly impossible to maintain, androgyny is an ideal goal—a vision of unity and harmony within the confines of the human” (4). From my own experience of androgyny and gender performance outside the binary, rather than primarily a state of mind, I identify it as a state of being. True, to enact a performance of ambiguity or nonbinary potential requires a sense of mind that focuses on creating the ephemeral stylized performance; however, for someone whose reality is identifying outside the binary normative of gender, they perform what they are. Kimbrough is correct in his assertion that true androgyny is challenging to accomplish; however, for nonbinary individuals, there is never a moment where the androgynous state of mind turns off. Though the embodied

daily performance of gender may differ daily, androgynous and gender non-conforming individuals continue to exist and take up the spaces between the binary.

Kimbrough continues to engage with the fact that sex and gender are fundamentally different and how “[androgyny is] the urge of a person rooted in a sex to grow beyond gender realization to a more encompassing experience of human realization” (5). As we know, sex is the biological makeup and physical identifier of male and female (and everything in between). In contrast, gender is the socially constructed daily performance of an individual’s humanity. In relation to wholeness, androgyny is framed as a more inclusive and thorough understanding of the human experience. This definition is vital precisely because it gestures to the freedom of expression and understanding that androgyny allows as a specific removal from one biological sex. Similarly, as androgyny relates to human wholeness, there is also an association with accepting the aspects of human nature. Kimbrough states that androgyny, as a word, “embraces all of humanity—the shared and the unshared biological characteristics together” (6). This definition speaks to being able to relate to the whole human experience without having the same physical understanding. For example, someone does not have to have their period once a month to understand the female human experience. Kimbrough continues and claims that “shakespeare’s word [for androgyny] is ‘kind’” and therefore, “androgyny is the acceptance of our kind-ness” (6). Androgyny, as “the acceptance of our kind-ness,” encompasses every aspect of what it means to be human. It is framed in understanding as everyone goes through a similar but different version of humanity, as there is no one human body nor one set of gendered attributes prescribed to daily social life.

Gilbert rejoins this conversation as an inherent link exists in understanding the similarities and differences between androgyny and hermaphroditism. She claims, “in early

modern usage the words androgyne and hermaphrodite...were often used as equivalents. They signified a spectrum of possibilities in relation to the sexed body, religious and philosophical imagery, gendered behavior and sexual practice” (10). Picturing the two terms, hermaphrodite and androgyne, respectively, as the opposite ends of the same spectrum is essential for how the early modern period understood them—with that, understanding that there is a correlation with the androgyne as the divine ideal, whereas the hermaphrodite represents a more monstrous or shameful reality. Understanding the differences in depiction and representation is vital as the different representations come with various reactions, and it is important to know why a playwright might use a specific variation over another to tell a particular story. Interestingly, as Gilbert puts it, “the androgyne is hermaphroditized by its association with the flesh. Conversely, the grossly embodied hermaphrodite might be ‘androgynized’ by an association with the sublime” (13). In the context of my argument, this distinction in the performance of a gender-ambiguous character is essential as the performance of such is affected by its proximity to reality, whether in the form of ethereal, heavenly androgyny or that of tangible, physical hermaphroditism. Similarly, these performative distinctions, for the plays in which they are located, could be presented simultaneously as both a good thing and a bad thing.

It is important to realize, as Gilbert does, that as the terms exist on opposite ends of the same spectrum, they can easily be compared to and conflated. The location on the spectrum where these figures reside is established by the figure's proximity to flesh and humanity and its proximity to the divine and ideal. As Gilbert explains, there seems to have been “a gradual shift in attention towards the body rather than the spirit; the hermaphrodite rather than the androgyne” (13). Similarly, Kimbrough recounts that “androgyny can be attributed to a growing awareness that human being is more than sex identification and the attendant attribution and development of

gender” (20). There is an inherent link between these two terms and how the public consciousness would have viewed and received representations of them.

With the new focus on the inward discoveries of exploring the human being (gesturing to the beginning of scientific advances in the biological understanding of the body), it makes sense that the attention on sexual indeterminacy would shift from, as Kimbrough claims, the impossible ideal and more spiritual classification to the more tangible reality of both gender and sexual ambiguity. Continuing the thread of androgyne as a heavenly ideal, Kimbrough claims “androgyny, like alchemy, is the microcosmic attempt to discover and imitate the macrocosm, the *universe*” (17). I find this exaggeration helpful in my argument due to the connection the hyperbole has to encompassing the whole human experience. To continue, in connection to the distillation of gender performativity by Butler and Mangan above, I argue that androgyny as a performative is the attempt to experience gender possibilities to their full extent. The androgynous, nonbinary, and/or gender non-conforming (GNC) figure experiences for itself an effort to exist in the liminal space between sexual and gender identity, whether in the form of the physically intersexed/hermaphroditic body or the set of gendered acts and gestures that one attaches to themselves. With that, there is the attempt on society’s part to contain and control the androgynous figure with various mechanisms of misandrogyny which I’ll unpack more thoroughly later in this section.

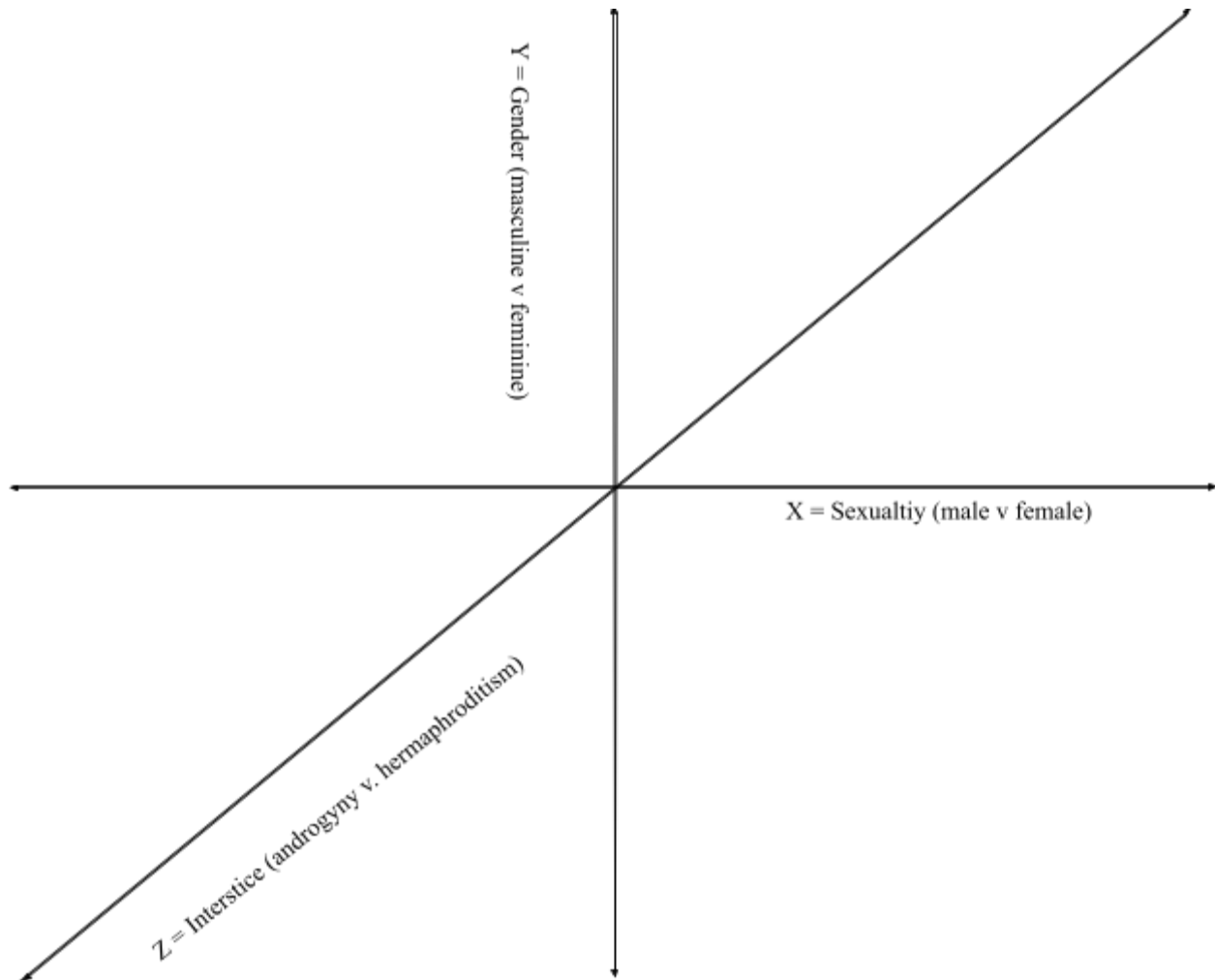
Gilbert explains, “in its most positive form, then, the androgyne was representative of the mystical union of opposites and came to symbolize the ideal unity of married love” (17). This correlation between the androgyne and the married union of the sexes makes the relationship between hermaphroditic figures and heteronormative ones that much more connected. As they play together, they both become a visual representation of relative human wholeness. The

difference is the experience of one's wholeness vs. the couple's collective wholeness. Gilbert continues by stating, "marriage, which united the sexes in spiritual and physical union, was seen as a form of androgynous hermaphroditism. It fictively incorporated the two (hetero)sexual bodies into a transcendent ideal reunion of parts" (17-18). As discussed previously in this chapter, the relationship between the performance of the hermaphrodite and the heterosexual normative union of marriage is strengthened as both represent social and cultural ideals of human wholeness. The difference is the androgyne or hermaphrodite experiences the ideal wholeness or monstrous reality of the combined experience of the sexes, whether that be in terms of a physically intersexed body or the representation of gender ambiguity. The heteronormative version, as explained above, is the social and cultural conjoining of the sexes with the ideal goal of having, ultimately, a hermaphroditic child as a physically tangible combination of the father and mother. However, in line with this logic, the child cannot fully be considered hermaphroditic as society immediately categorizes them within the social binary hierarchy (unless, of course, the child is physically intersex).

As both representations of human wholeness (that of the androgyne/hermaphrodite alongside the heteronormative union of marriage) share the same playing space, the norms of social heterosexuality were actively challenged. Gilbert suggests that "throughout the early modern period, the sign of hermaphroditism was used repeatedly to signify transgressions of conventional gender codes and legitimate sexual practice, and the term 'hermaphroditism' was used metaphorically to label appearances or behaviors that challenged the heterosexual binary of gender" (25). As I have noted previously, didactic authors of the period clearly understood the power of the theatrical hermaphrodite and its androgynous potential while being presented on stage to interrogate the social normalities of the period in a public space. As the hermaphroditic

figure was placed and performed beside the heterosexual norm and union of marriage, both versions of the socially idealized androgyne are represented and even messed with. The ultimate goal of these authors was to inspire a conversation about the spectrum of identity that gender can represent to any number of people.

Playing with the limits of binary gender assumptions and the relatively thin boundaries between the categories of masculine and feminine was as important then as it is now. "Playing," in terms of theatrical and self-discovery, allows us to use our current understanding of gender and sexuality in conversation with the early modern understanding of such further to assert the natural occurrence of gender and sexual variation. However, as the androgynous figure in representation may take many forms, the more effeminate the representation chooses to be, the lower on the hierarchical ladder it becomes. Gilbert reflects, "rather than incorporating the balanced fusion of opposites that was figured by the androgynous ideal (vigour/softness), the female hermaphrodite...was neither properly male nor female. By testing the limits of gender she had become instead an hermaphroditic outcast" (27-28). With the understanding of the term *androgyne* itself reasserts the gendered hierarchy of male (*andro*) over female (*gyne*), it makes sense that a more effeminized performance of the androgynized hermaphrodite would have a different set of reactions as femininity has continually been a sensitive topic of discussion.



(Fig. #1)

From the understanding that gender indeterminacy is itself a spectrum, there are three different spectrums that I am working with: the spectrum of sexuality, male and female; the spectrum of gender, masculine and feminine; and the spectrum of interstice, androgyny and hermaphrodite. To use mathematical terms, as shown in the graph (Fig. #1) above, the X-axis represents the spectrum of sexuality, the Y-axis is the spectrum of gender, and the Z-axis is the spectrum of interstice. Unfortunately, the two-dimensional visualization of these spectrums is limiting as they specifically affect the three-dimensional world. The intersectionality of the axes

represents a deeper engagement with gender indeterminacy and sexual deviation as modes of theatrical playing and interrogation. In this model, what is the physical embodiment of each spectral axis' 0°? The ideal combined embodiment of human wholeness? Is the complete central combination of the three even achievable? Additionally, would this be an ideal? Or some sort of erasure of the three individual states in all their richness and complexity? Though I do not specifically answer any of these questions in this thesis, they are important to consider when establishing where Ariel, Puck, and Snap align best on the gender graph.

In comparison to homosexuality, Gilbert states, “it would seem that hermaphroditism, like sodomy, was the sin that could not speak its name. And of course that is why its story was so often told. In the slippage between the terms both were charged with the desire of the forbidden” (29). Since all three spectrums and the enactments of each are in conversation with one another, it makes sense then that the “sins” associated with sexual deviation would be in conversation as well. Because the physically sexed body of the hermaphrodite was so often conflated with the physically homosexual practice and “sin” of sodomy, there is a great deal of care needed to view the active and reactive interplay between the sinful and spiritual—again, the difference and intersectional conversation between the “monstrous” physical reality and the heavenly impossibility of true androgyny.

Now, this does not mean, of course, that there has not been a significant push by society to force trans and gender non-conforming people into categories within the patriarchal binary gender hierarchy. Jeff Engelhardt discusses this matter with more modern examples with a mechanism he calls “misandrogyny” and places it in conversation with its sister mechanisms of misogyny and transphobia. Within the three mechanisms comes the shared sense of discrimination of identities that potentially challenge the patriarchal rule of masculinity.

Engelhardt states that “where misogyny targets women because they ought to be subordinate according to the dominant gender structures, misandrogyny targets GNC [gender non-conforming] folks because they ought not to exist according to the dominant gender structures” (2). The target on the back of GNC people comes with much more harm and violence when adherence to the social order forces people to conform to binary (and only binary) gendered categories. To Engelhardt, there are specific categories for these mechanisms and how they specifically target GNC people: mechanisms of assignment, mechanisms of assimilation, and lastly, mechanisms of annihilation. He describes that the first set of mechanisms “push individual GNC folk into nonexistence.” The second set of mechanisms “push individual GNC folk into one patriarchal gender role or the other—typically (but not always) the role associated with their sex assignment at birth.” The last mechanisms “aim to bring it about that GNC folk are nonexistent” (2). Each set of mechanisms of misandrogyny perpetuates an increasingly violent reaction and containment of GNC people's public displays, which are frequently encountered on a day-to-day basis.

As Engelhardt suggests, assignment mechanisms are centered in the early years of one's life; this assignment is an active force between infancy and adulthood. This kind of active assignment can take many forms, ranging from hair lengths prescribed by gender to the physical mutilation and sex changes of intersex children (7). Engelhardt explains that most “nudges and corrections often come from parents, teachers, coaches, and friends. Children who wear the ‘wrong’ clothes, play with the wrong toys, play the wrong sports, play too aggressively or too passively, speak in the wrong ways, walk in the wrong ways, etc., etc. are often thereby situated among patriarchal norms as gender non-conforming” (8). This is already a confusing time for a child as they discover more about themselves daily. Having outside forces dictate codes of action

based on arbitrary social rules means that children wrestling with potential non-conformity have extra pressure placed on them to fit in and be gender-conforming. Such a constant and active assignment mechanism lasts well into adulthood. Engelhardt states, “teens and adults, especially those read as AFAB (assigned female at birth), might receive humiliating nudges or corrections that push them toward their perceived gender assignment: advice on makeup, clothes, hairstyles, social passivity, etc. or for those read as AMAB (assigned male at birth), exhortations to be more aggressive, dominant, muscular, etc.” (8). This specific kind of assignment later in life stems from the physical changes to the body that come after puberty, which means that until visible gender identifiers appear on the adolescent body, the GNC child might be able to pass through the world with little to no backlash.

The next step of assimilation is a more passive mechanism than assignment; however, that does not make what is considered assimilation less frequently encountered. Engelhardt claims that “if you [identify as male and female] or neither [male or female], then patriarchal gender segregation organizes the world such that there is no place for you. If you want to use the bathroom, live in a dormitory, play a sport, or access a shelter for homelessness, addiction, or to escape abuse, then you will often have to assimilate into the gender binary; this means you must stop being both/neither, conceal your gender nonconformity, or let others overlook it” (10). Assimilation here is placed within the hierarchical structures of society, and interactions with it require a sense of care, as following this set of rules for GNC people can often lead to more violence. Similarly, assimilation here resonates with code-switching when encountering a new environment with different social rules to obey.

From here comes the last and most violent step Engelhardt lays out: the mechanisms of annihilation. As the harshness of the wording suggests, these mechanisms are designed to force

trans and GNC people into the place of ultimate inexistence. Using blocks as a visual image, Engelhardt pictures, “if mechanisms of assignment push triangular (oval, rectangular, trapezoidal, etc.) blocks into square and round holes and mechanisms of assimilation produce systems that have only round and square holes, then mechanisms of annihilation discard, discount, and destroy blocks that aren’t round or square.” Annihilation, with strong ties to functions of colonialism, aims to remove that which does not belong in the set patriarchal hierarchy. This mechanism is familiar to a twenty-first-century audience, with scapegoat tactics such as “gay panic” being a common reaction to people’s discomfort with being around gender indeterminacy. All three categories of mechanisms are in direct conversation with other intersectional factors of societal othering. As Engelhardt points out, “worldwide, at least 350 trans and gender non-conforming people were murdered from the beginning of October 2019 to the end of September 2020; disproportionately many were Black women or women of color, sex workers, migrants, and/or poor” (12). The intersectionality of oppression must be understood to move forward, as several factors contribute to a person’s experience with othering.

Turning back to an early modern understanding, other terms of the period used to identify transgender variation were “transfeminate” (turning from woman to man) and “transexion” (turning or passing from one sex to another), as put forward by scholar Joseph Gamble. Gamble begins his examination of gender variation and the use of “trans” words in the period with a study by Sir Thomas Browne, an English polymath and author, about the sex of hares called *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646). Granted, since this study is specifically about the sexuality of animals, it demands a little more care and caution when trying to relate it to human sexuality. However, the ability to locate similar phenomena in other animal kingdom groups helps us better understand the ways it shows up in human sexuality and gender performance. From this study,

Gamble has identified several “trans” words, including transexion and transfeminate (or transfeminated as it first shows up in the study,) that Browne found helpful in explaining the sexuality of hares concerning the sexuality of humans. These other words are “transition,” “transmutation,” “transformation,” “transfiguration,” and “transplantation” (2) as Browne claims that “like [figures he identified as “transitioning” from female to male], hares that seem to have transitioned from F to M ‘have undergone no real or new transexion, but were androgynally borne’ (148)—that is, born male, if ambiguously so—and have simply been mistaken for female” (3). All of the terms so far identify the early modern period as one that dealt with gender fluidity and transness, whether culturally acceptable or accurate in description and application or not. However, Browne is interested in the use of “trans” to describe gender variation and sexual instability. In his larger recount of trans philology through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Gamble theorizes that “trans is the perpetual extension of the elements of gendered existence. *Perpetual* extension: that is, a process without a set product” (11).

The perpetual extension that trans individuals bring to the vast spectrum of gender and sexuality, harkening back to Butler, reminds us that there are several different ways to enact or embody a given gender concerning the sexed body enacting the performance of it. It is in the continual repetition of acts of gender that the perpetual extension of gendered existence can continue its cycle of production without a set product in mind. Gamble continues to point out that

Trans people...are practicing a form of philology when they generate new pronouns like ze and hir, or when they produce new gender identity labels like genderqueer, genderfluid, nonbinary, demigender, or genderfuck. And even beyond an investment in the transformative potential of language, trans people are performing some of the most

vital forms of textual criticism—a key strain of philology—imaginable today. Emending, glossing, bracketing, and collating various visions of the relationship between gender and bodies, trans people are, in many ways, gender's editors. (11)

Gamble is noting here the vast array of identities that can be placed underneath the trans umbrella, as each distinguishes themselves from the normative binary gender attributes of masculine and feminine as well as the binary sexual identifiers of male and female. Gamble rightly places the nonbinary identity underneath the trans umbrella as one of the relatively newer terms used to distinguish a specific version of gender expression.

So far in this chapter, I've introduced the intersex-androgyne spectrum to visualize an ongoing intersectional classification in terms of a figure's adherence to, and defiance of, the binary norms of gender performativity and gender identity. I then built on this idea by introducing the early modern concept of the hermaphrodite, which demonstrates that the early modern period was a time in which gender deviation and subversion were exciting to playwrights as they utilized the figure. Additionally, this figure shows up often alongside the heteronormative union of the sexes in the form of marriage to challenge societal norms on a public platform. This framework is crucial in understanding the potential performative choices that come with enacting characters like Ariel and Puck, as well as Snap, as I attempt to show. Now, I will deepen this investigation by analyzing early modern childhood, bringing Butler's ideas on gender performativity to life in the everyday lives of early modern people.

Early Modern Childhood

When thinking about these magical characters and gender ambiguity, another layer of queerness attaches to them based on the actors who would have originated these roles: the boy

apprentices of the theatre companies. However, before I can touch on boy actors, I must first talk about early modern childhood. The early modern child's experience in life was separated into two different gendered spheres: the feminine sphere of the household and the masculine sphere of the workforce and education. However, the separation of these spheres in the larger sociocultural setting is influenced by location, profession, and class, making the distinction between the two in any given situation more difficult to separate. In the home, children, regardless of gender, had the same upbringing. They wore the same clothes, were taught the same chores, and told the same stories midwives (sisters and mothers) would tell them about fairies and magic. This reveals that children in the early modern period were not as strictly bound to the social hierarchy of gendered categories until a specified time, which gave way for the early modern child to function as a kind of third gender. In the context of *The Tempest*, and in line with the logic of the child as a third gender, Ezra Horbury suggests that "if the child may function as a third gender, Ariel is far more readily collapsed into that third gender of servile, androgynous, shape-changing, dramaturgical childhood than that of a man" (6). From this, we can deduce that didactic representations of mystical fairy-like characters have a child-like air, allowing each character to look at the world through a child's curious eyes. This child-like curiosity is where mischief and magic are born from.

Will Fisher explains, "the modern distinction between 'nature' and 'culture' (or 'sex' and 'gender') was a consequence of the Enlightenment and scientific revolution, and before that time, the terms themselves had a different range of meanings" (5). From Fisher, it is clear that our modern understanding of the concepts of "sex" and "gender" would have looked and been used differently based on people's knowledge of "culture" and "nature" in the period. Though there were terms used in the period that grappled with gender and its instability, they had a

different range of meanings. To continue, Fisher states, “the differences between modern and early modern notions of gender identity can be further clarified by looking at how ‘sex change’ is understood in the two periods” (7). In modern understanding, a “sex change” refers to the potentially “radical and decisive shift from one state of being to another” (7) and is often synonymous with a physical surgical change of the genitals. For the early moderns, however, a “sex change” was understood as a natural occurrence that happened spontaneously or in response to some form of physical activity (8). This gestures to the early modern understanding of the elemental humors, which “regulate” the body's temperature, and the knowledge of men and women having the *same genitalia*. The difference is that women lacked the “heat” needed for the genitals to be outside their body (A. Shepard 335). Similarly, it is also implied from sex change stories of the era that often changes to facial hair as well as the hair on the head would accompany the change in genitalia (Fisher 8-9). Similarly, clothing was thought to have the power to “deeply make” identity (Fisher 9/14).

With that said, there was a general understanding of the power of imagination. Fisher claims, “if people believed that imagination could modify the fetus, they also believed it could modify the body of the imaginer” (14). Therefore, it is safe to say that people believed that focusing your mind on the sex or image of another could metamorphose the body into that state of being, which puts the imagination into a position of social danger. As Fisher explains, these imaginings were also believed to have been brought about by subtle spirits (15). Now regarding early modern queer children specifically, there was a sense of trying to shield the child from the representations of sexual deviance and/or gender indeterminacy. In their edited collection *Queering Childhood in Early Modern Drama and Culture*, Jennifer Higginbotham and Mark Albert Johnston explain that “the irony is that, even though the modern ideal of childhood

innocence would, on one hand, deny children sexual knowledge, subjective sexual agency, and sexual identity, it insists on the other that all children are implicitly straight and in need of vigilant protection from the corruptive influences of deviant queerness” (3). This denial of sexual literacy for children leads adults to be illiterate about sexual desire and experiences as well. Offering the opportunity for children to learn about the sexual feelings and desires they may have to place a name on instead of simply sweeping it under the rug allows children the agency to learn about themselves and help them formulate their thoughts on sex and desire and ultimately consent in such matters. Higginbotham and Johnston are correct in asserting that this leads to children growing up in an environment of enforced straightness where curiosity or engagement in other modes of sexual expression are hidden from, forbidden, or out of reach of the child and protected from them by the parent or guardian. Similarly to the depictions of the hermaphrodite used by didactic authors, “the queer children that frequently populate [the early modern romance and new comedy genre that usually ends in heterosexual union], however, often enact subversive strategies and deviant scripts within or alongside these heterosexually straightforward storylines” (Higg. and John. 4).

As this idea connects with my previous conversation on the connection between the hermaphroditic figure and heteronormative marital union, I think the choice to place these queer figures alongside the plot of heteronormativity attempts to establish a sense of normalcy within both theatrical and societal spaces. This kind of relationship of plot reflects that homosexuality and gender expression outside of the traditional binary is a present aspect of daily life, and the active engagement in didactic literature of the period is evidence of that. Playwrights, then, would utilize these queer and non-queer storylines in tandem to experiment with gender and

sexual expression while functioning simultaneously with the social hierarchy in place.

Higginbotham and Johnston reassert the contemporary understanding that

Since we can never fully extricate our own ideological conditioning from the critical readings of our cultural productions of the past, some of the most important questions we can ask of those representations reflectively ponder our own role in determining what we discover: why do we construe a given character as being a child, or queer, or as neither?

(5)

The “why” here is the crux of my thesis because it touches on all these areas. What modern evidence do we use to construct versions of the past that best fit the narrative threads we as scholars want it to? Is there even anything queer about childhood and performances of such in the first place? True, we, as theatre makers, have many different ideas regarding the roles we are cast in. It is ultimately up to our discoveries found within the texts we are working with, the cultural landscape in which the play was written/performed, and the sociocultural climate in which it is currently being produced. With this “why,” there also comes the all-important question of “why this play now?” In conversation with this thesis, I think it necessary to uncover areas in drama where the temporality of queerness can be utilized as a space of discovery to determine what narrative threads the production wants to pull to tell a specific story.

To continue, the duo claims, “the relative queerness that we attribute to early modern renditions of children and childhood thus exposes as much about our own culturally and historically specific assumptions, tendencies, fears, and desires as it does about those of the authors and audiences originally producing and consuming the cultural materials under review here” (6). Higginbotham and Johnston get at the human tendency to repeat. As a society, we consistently repeat ourselves, going over and debating similar issues that have been discussed for

centuries. Discussions on gender and sexuality are no different, as those who choose to express their sexual or gender identity that is outside of the binary norms are continually threatened, bullied, and even murdered. However, we can use what we understand from past discussions on the same topic to help inform our more modern sense of the concept. With repetition in mind, as Judith Butler and Michael Mangan remind us, as the discussions and issues surrounding gender ambiguity have been in the state of repetitive limbo, so have the various performances of repeatable gendered gestures or social signifiers. Early modern children and queerness are “mutually unmoored constructs functioning as discontinuous fetish objects, compelled to ground abstract concepts and ideals like sex and sexuality, gender and genre, class and status, age and temporality, physicality and physiology, and so forth” (Higg. and John. 6).

This quote is within the context of didactic literature. With that in mind, authors of this literature, playwrights and pamphleteers mainly, were aware of the underlying queerness involved in childhood and utilized the concepts in their writing as a way to test the boundaries of the conversations their audiences could handle. Purposefully choosing to include a queer character, whether a child or not, and whether or not the term “queer” meant the same thing then as it does now, is active engagement on a public scale with something that society has consistently deemed uncomfortable and wrong. This allows audiences to interrogate their feelings towards the play and the issues explicitly being played with in real-time, where the theatre becomes a place of cultural debate and suspended reality.

Concerning the ideal human wholeness found in marriage and, therefore, the hermaphrodite appearing in the birth of a child, Higginbotham and Johnston note that “early modern children’s metonymic function to their parents also works both ways: while they constitute mimetic reflections and hermaphroditic confections of their mothers and fathers in

miniature, and the vehicles of their parents' hopes and desires for posterity, they also serve as virtual conduits, relaying the world's estimation and treatment of them back upon their masters and mistresses" (11). The child as the hermaphroditic conflation of their parents is a fascinating and slightly uncomfortable image, but it does carry some truth. In the basest terms possible, then yes, a hermaphrodite is the physical combination of masculine and feminine features, which does place children under that category as a combination of their parents. We see this in how children learn, absorb information constantly, and repeat what they have seen/heard. This observation and repetition could be another example of parents in miniature, but as the child grows up, that is how they learn: they observe a task, then practice and repeat it until they can get it right. It's the same when it comes to learning a trade. In a way, then, knowledge is just what we can absorb, understand for ourselves, and regurgitate.

There is still the presence of the hierarchical structures of the patriarchy present throughout an early modern child's lifetime. The duo of scholars above touches on that aspect, claiming, "even a great deal of gender theory...tends to conflate boyhood with manhood in discussions of gender bending, transvestitism, sexual transformations, and the like" (15). The conflation of the two categories is essential for understanding the connective tissues between masculinity and unmasculinity, especially in the context of the early modern playhouse where the feminine roles would have been enacted by an androgynous presenting boy actor or a recently graduated boy actor. In that way, I argue it might have been easier for playwrights to play around with gender deviance and ambiguity while relying on the bodies of boys to tell that story because of their ability to take on the performativity of femininity because of, in Higginbotham and Johnston's words, the relative "smoothness" of the young boy's body (15-16). The "smoothness" in question concerns the hairlessness of the boy's body before puberty. Mixed with their

naturally higher-pitched voice, young boys were the perfect avatar for enacting performances of characters perceived as unmasculine (whether just as female characters and/or as gender-ambiguous characters). Furthermore, there comes the potential connotation that characters who are not perceived as masculine are perceived as childish in comparison; possibly a direct case of infantilization. In terms of homoeroticism, Higginbotham and Johnston connect the smoothness of the boy's body to "their reputedly slick and slippery potential to manipulate, coerce, and influence the men to whom they grant sexual favors" (15-16). The ability of the boy to manipulate, together with my earlier discussions of gender performativity, presents an opportunity for performance where an unmasculine character may be able to use their take on infantilization in the form of childish mischief as a mode of which to acquire their overall goal in the play. I argue that Ariel, Puck, and Snap utilize their infantilized status to appeal to the parties they serve and implement strategies to obtain their goal. Granted, as my argument will show, Ariel and Snap have more of a goal in mind than Puck does, but the functionality of their respective stories remains similar. From here, as I began to touch on already, I will transition into the connection between early modern childhood and the relationship between the master and *his* apprentice.

The Apprentice and the Master, the Boy Actor

The transition into manhood for young boys in the early modern era Horbury connects with the concept of unlearning female pedagogy to grow up and become a man. That is, "a boy must be educated and disciplined in order to exorcise the fairies" (4). Horbury also theorizes that Ariel might have been played by a woman as early as the Restoration period, allowing audiences to categorize Ariel within the "feminine mystique" and, therefore, the "feminine realm of

childhood” further (4). This explicit separation of spheres is deliberate and necessary for continuing the constructions of the gender hierarchy, but when was this transition period for early modern boys? Mark Thornton Burnett and his work on *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture* notes that “usually between 10 and 30 years of age and unmarried, servants were to be found in 29 percent of all households during the period, and a substantial proportion of young people of both sexes could expect to be servants at some stage of their lives” (1). The master/servant dynamic was commonplace in the cultural consciousness of the period. It is impressive that this kind of service was expected of many young people regardless of gender. This also means that while Shakespeare and his contemporaries were writing, a good portion of the people in England were either presently in or recently released from servanthood or apprenticeship. As the introduction and first chapter explain, dramatists and other didactic writers were aware of the commonality of servanthood. They frequently utilized the concept in their texts to appeal to that population of audience. Granted, more of this population would likely be present at Shakespeare’s Globe, among other theatres, as it was more open to the public, and the Blackfriars Playhouse would have been more private.

Also included in the servant population of the period were apprentices of all kinds of trades and guilds, including the boy actors of the playhouses. With that comes the understanding that all apprentices are servants, but not all servants are apprentices. Burnett claims, “although training took the place of wages, apprentices were nevertheless regarded as servants. They were placed in a position of subordination, served for a fixed term, were instructed to conduct themselves with diligence and were expected to show reverence to the master, who ideally combined the roles of commercial employer and caring *paterfamilias*” (3). With that, the “wage” an apprentice would receive is more along the lines of room and board, with the master of the

trade taking them in as a parental figure as the apprentice would live in the house of their master. Depending on how long the apprenticeship lasted and the nature of the master, there was the potential for an incredibly close connection between master and apprentice, similar to a familial bond. Burnett continues by claiming, “the ways in which servants are represented in English Renaissance drama and culture articulate some of the period’s deepest sensitivities and aspirations, point to attempts to understand and control the changes that were challenging the contemporary order, and disclose fears of political instability, disorder and social frustration and unrest” (5). The inclusion of servant or apprentice characters in didactic literature of the period was in direct response to the present fears and anxieties and changes in societal structures in place. This inclusion is significant regarding apprentices, as it was known that that demographic could potentially rise and riot if their specific wants and needs were not satisfied.

Furthermore, with the queerness of the early modern child, I argue that the master and apprentice relationship is one that also engages in homoerotic tendencies. To continue, as Burnett explains, the relationship relies on adherence to the “hierarchical structure,” as “servants as well as masters are an integral part of the perpetuation of forms of social control” (7). Hierarchical structures and status are integral to the social dynamics of the early modern period. Some form of hierarchy was always present throughout daily life: child to parent, student to teacher, servant/apprentice to master, employee to employer, subject to king/queen, etc. There also comes the danger of a more homosexual relationship between the set as the adolescent boy’s body appears androgynous. Similarly, in his work on *Boy Actors in Early Modern England*, Harry McCarthy identified the transitional period of boys as between seven and fourteen. This set median of ages is significant because of the stress the early modern period put on the body’s physical capabilities. McCarthy draws from a book by Bartholomeus Anglicus (a 13th century

French Scholar) titled *De Proprietatibus Rerum* (On the Properties of Things), translated into English in 1582 by Stephen Batman (a clergyman and author). In the translation of this text, McCarthy identifies the set median of ages as the time in which the adolescent boy's body was “‘softe of fleshe, lythie and plyant of body’ and ‘able and lyght to moving’ and thereby ‘witte to learn’” (30). Childhood and the transitional state into adulthood are inherently about discovery and learning. The discoveries made for the child in question can be found in the simple games, evoking joy and bursts of energy. It would stand to reason that a similar kind of excitement in discovery would be in place in the different areas of education for both boys and girls. However, because of the male-dominated spaces of the playhouses and theatre companies, this thesis focuses on the performativity of androgyny against and alongside the heteronormative and masculine.

In the context of the playhouse, the apprentice actors' role turns the playhouse's location, or wherever the theatre company was working, into a place of intense physical activity, labor, and education. McCarthy explains that playwrights and other authors of didactic literature were aware of how valuable the body of the boy actor was for specific physical tasks and utilized it within the text of their plays to “illustrate not merely boys’ suitability for ‘labour’ in general, but how this suitability might be applied in specific trades, industries, and educational environments” (33). McCarthy suggests that the work of theatre companies was rigorous and mimicked the structured education provided by other trades and guilds (36). As such, the physical capabilities of the adolescent (or pre-adolescent) boy’s body. Higginbotham and Johnston’s discussion of the boy’s “smoothness” comes back into play as a direct utilization of the capabilities of the boy’s body to perform a feminine mystique. In tandem, Burnett explains that “the theatre, moral treatises, and popular literature, in different ways and at different times, fulfilled several

ideological purposes simultaneously, underscoring prevailing establishment views, qualifying the ideals of particular literary conventions, and creating a culture within which dissident apprentice energies might be articulated” (15-16). Theatrical texts and other forms of literature in the period acknowledged the servant/apprentice experience as a form of allyship with them with many moments of allyship containing comedic relief.

The relationship between boy actors as apprentices and how authors aligned with the struggles between the apprentice and master is very intriguing. Burnett explains, “in practice, apprentices seem to have come into conflict with their social superiors” (19). Because of the potential for apprentices to revolt against their masters, playwrights were able to utilize the fears and anxieties of uprising within their didactic literature as a way of both aligning with the ideals, wants, and needs of the apprentices while also upholding the hierarchical structures within the apprenticeship. Burnett also states, “the apprentice’s diligence was put to a variety of metaphorical uses, which both reduced and magnified interrelated economic and social imperatives” (20). The apprentice's diligent nature mimics Prospero's language for Ariel in *The Tempest* when he refers to them as “my diligence.” There seems to be an inherent want in the apprentice to do their job to the best of their ability and to learn everything they can from it. With that, if something hindered their ability to achieve in their field and complete their apprenticeship, they would come together and force social change while still functioning within a hierarchical structure.

Burnett continues by explaining that “adventure genres served to direct aggression into realms of heroic fantasy: dramatists and pamphleteers, with one eye on the censors and the other on apprentices who clamoured for new publications, negotiated contemporary questions by relocating them to an exotic environment” (25). Using exotic environments as the setting for

apprentice heroism allowed playwrights to continue the didactic use of the struggles apprentices faced while separating that reality from the reality of a more fantastical struggle and/or location. *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* align with this idea of an exotic environment as the master/servant relationships represented in these plays primarily occur on an island and in the magical forest of Athens. At the same time, apprentices would be able to recognize and relate to the servant status of Puck and Ariel, their functionality within the structure and world of the play, and, necessarily, the realities of the play and social life.

Once again, the distinction between the feminine sphere of childhood and the masculine sphere of adulthood is crucial to identify as the gender ambiguity of the early modern boy actor was frequently used to signify gender variance on the stage; which became the embodiment of femininity in the form of social spectacle. Similarly, this embodiment of femininity was typical in the period, and several actors emerged from it. Simone Chess flags the careers of actors Richard Robinson, Richard Sharpe, and Edward Kynaston, who were renowned for portraying women's roles (Chess et al. 8), though the list does not include every famous boy actor. This frequent spectacle of gender performance in a society governed by the social hierarchy of the patriarchy often was interrogated due to the performance being that of the transvestite. The *OED* classifies a transvestite as, "n. a person who dresses in clothes conventionally associated with the opposite sex, esp. regularly or habitually; *spec.* (chiefly *Psychology*) a person (typically a man) who derives sexual pleasure from cross-dressing" (Sense 1). Stephen Orgel touches on this interrogation, claiming that "there were many polemical debates in England about the dangers to public morality of transvestite boy actors; but none that argued in favor of the introduction of women as an alternative" (3). Other European countries, like Spain and Italy, did not have the same restrictions on women and they were allowed to perform on stage, unlike England. It does

make sense, however, that women on the early modern stage became a lot more commonplace in the Jacobean and Carolinian periods, where courtly masques include the queens as a concept in the performance and as performers in the masque itself.

What does not make sense, however, is that there seems to have been no desire for women to step into these feminine roles of the early modern playhouse, but audiences were content with seeing the transvestite boy's performance in place of it. Therefore, this performance becomes a public debate of morality. As Laura Levine points out, this is partially because of "the fear that costume could actually alter the male body beneath the costume" (3). In this context, technically, there is an inherent kind of embodied gender performance and a potential magical transformation in the reality of the play being staged and viewed by an audience. Though these debates were everywhere, the performance of the transvestite boy actor was so commonly used that it functioned as an attempt at the stabilization of gender variance. Orgel states that the gendered embodiment enacted by boy actors was "essential precisely as a contrast, always available to interrogate, unsettle, reinterpret the norms, which were always conceived to be unstable – the interrogation, indeed, was an essential part of the never-ending attempt at stabilization" (108).

The anxieties with and interrogation of performative acts of gender in the early modern period stem from the fear of effeminization. Often, this fear is in tandem with the weakness of man to fall quickly into lust. Orgel flags this fear as "a central element in all discussions of what constitutes a 'real man' in the period, and the fantasy of the reversal of the natural transition from woman to man undermines it" (26). Similarly, gender instability mimics sexual instability in representations of 'foulness' in terms of physiology precisely aligned with gender identifiers, which is often confirmed by exposure (Horbury 8). However, though gender instability can and

has been read onto Ariel, it is met more with temperance and affection rather than panic; the fear of effeminization seems to be a dormant one. With that comes the knowledge that as the construction of the social gender hierarchy in the era differs from our modern understanding, so could the use of pronouns. The early modern era, therefore, was one that consistently played with gender variation in performance. For those unbothered or invested in the performance, the early modern playhouse became a place of queer acceptance. With that, whether the feminine characters portrayed were based on realism or caricature, gender performances were in tandem with class distinction (Orgel 120-21). This collaboration of gender indeterminacy and class distinction allowed playwrights of the period to challenge the societal norms of both concepts simultaneously. However, what does the relative queerness of the early modern child and boy actor have to do with fairies?

Androgynous Potential

Representations of fairies and other elements of folklore and magic became more literary and domesticated in the early modern era. The domestication of the fairy presents a clear relationship between the fairy and the child (specifically boys in this context), as early modern fairies are often categorized by their child-like behavior and the mischief their magic creates (Horbury 4). Early modern depictions of transness seem to carry with them a sense of the supernatural in the guise of cross-gender ambiguity, which concludes that the supernatural characters have been and will continue to be a place in which the embodiment of gender performance is tampered and played with. Current productions seem to be aware of the similarities of fairies and children as the ensemble fairy characters of *A Midsummer Night's*

Dream are often cast and performed by children or with a child-like nature, as seen in Meadowlark Shakespeare Player's recent production.

Similarly, the early modern era was aware of this, too, as boy apprentice actors would have likely originated these more ethereal roles. Boys and fairies continue to exist on the same playing field as their mischievous tendencies characterize both. Horbury also connects the "shakespearean repurposing of fairies' violence as childish mischief" (4) to the literary personification of figures like Peter Pan (which connects with the idea of fairies being ageless and the 'never grow up' scenario), whose charm and whimsy in the mischief he creates is praised rather than punished. From this, there is a connection between androgyny and creation stories, as human means belonging to the earth and kind belonging to nature (Kimbrough 6). As a biblical connection, the phrase "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19, *New Oxford Annotated Bible*) seems relevant to this conversation. Humankindness, then, is the acknowledgment of our shared beginnings and ends, making the human experience one that relies on the shared experiences of those walking through life with you. With that, those you meet on your journey through life (whether friends or family) are one of your kind.

The specific relationship between androgyny and the Christian doctrine is fascinating as it is so often those who practice the evangelical faith that provide the most pushback to conversations of the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. From their research, Chess, Colby, and Fisher claim that "religious writers had long glorified nonbinary gendered states: in addition to representing angels as genderfluid or agender, they regularly articulated the belief that Adam was created as an androgyne or a "hermaphrodite" and imagined Jesus as a mother" (7). Gilbert picks up on this theme, too, claiming that "this theme of 'Jesus as Mother' was a part of a tradition that equated the allegorical female church (*ecclesia*) with the body of Christ" (14). With

that, as Gilbert also explains, monks and other religious figures were literal personifications of a holy or divine hermaphrodite as the relative Christian church regards the congregation as the *bride* of Christ. With that, Gilbert also explains that some religious leaders, like St. Augustine, revered the intersexed body still as a creation under God's image, insisting that "if hermaphrodites were cast as monsters, they were not necessarily of the nightmarish kind. He suggested they could also be marvels. They were, in fact, signs and inherently connected to representation (demonstration)" (22). From these connections, it is clear that early modern evangelical practice positioned itself as close to divine androgyny as possible, even as far as people shutting themselves off from earthly pleasures. Similarly, some faith practitioners regarded the hermaphrodite as holy in God's eyes and created in "his" image.

The creation of Adam as androgyne can be taken one step further if thought about in conversation with the concept of God. Biblical scholars can agree that God made man in "his" own image. However, as a being, God does not have a physical body; therefore, no identifiable gender characteristics can encapsulate "him." We as a society have attached masculinity to God, further aligning the Christian doctrine as one that perpetuates the patriarchy. Interestingly, if God is a genderless being and made man in "his" own image, then Adam, upon creation, was androgynous. Interestingly, in Christian doctrine, Eve was created from a part of Adam's body; suggesting that Adam's body "contained" Eve's. I argue that gender only became a potential binary with the creation of Eve, the physical separation of human wholeness, and "the myth of androgyny is the myth of 'highest perfection'" (Kimbrough 9-10). If androgyny can be understood as the attempt to understand human wholeness with the separation of gender in the creation story, androgyny also asks us to recall the past. Similarly, Fisher writes that "since God supposedly instituted [the physical differences between genders] as 'signs' of his holy order,

there was less of a need to distinguish sharply between what we would call today ‘sexual characteristics’ and ‘gendered characteristics’ (16) Moreover, these religious beliefs also made it easier to acknowledge or accept that these “signs” were malleable or alterable. This understanding of the malleability of gender performance is where this thesis situates itself as the characters I am specifically interested in exist in the temporality of queerness.

The temporality of queerness has been and will continue to be present in characters like Ariel and Puck because of Ariel’s association with divine androgyny and Puck’s association with childish mischief. However, a conversation on perpetuating the structures of othering has to be had. First, constructing any kind of argument for gender variance and how femininity and androgyny function inherently are in comparison with masculinity and what it is not. This “not” has a history of exploitation, and different depictions of unmasculinity become performances riddled with stigma and caricature. The term unmasculinity serves as a qualifier or supplement to Ariel’s, Puck’s, and Snap’s choices around gender performance.

Similarly, the term is different from androgyny in that it is a kind of protest or resistance to performing a gender that the patriarchy approves of. Sawyer Kemp’s work is pivotal for this conversation as they highlight ways to queer Shakespeare safely and inclusively while challenging the potential for queered characters to become a performance of misrepresentation. Several steps need to be taken regarding casting trans and nonbinary actors to play not only the roles under the temporality of queerness but any role. Kemp argues that “until critics and scholars make a shift from using trans and gender-nonconforming people as abstract tools of literary inquiry to prioritizing meaningfully giving voice to this diverse set of experiences, the ways in which we perform epistemology will continue to be fundamentally transphobic” (272). Kemp is also very centered in their notion that magical characters are a minefield in

trans/nonbinary representation. Restricting gender-ambiguous and trans actors to only characters under the temporality of queerness is limiting both the actor's ability to act and their want to get the chance to play a character that on the page is cisgender. Additionally, as Kemp points out, arbitrarily using the trans and genderqueer experience as an "abstract tool" in many ways negates any steps forward for stabilization and, ultimately, the normalization of the trans individual. For my thesis, I am pushing for stabilizing nonbinary and androgynous individuals as a trans/nonbinary person (or any person for that matter) can present an androgynous gendered performance. Still, the nonbinary identity does not require androgyny to "be allowed" to fall under the nonbinary umbrella.

Unsurprisingly, while framing these dangers within more modern times, trans-historicism gained increasing importance in a (potentially) post-Trumpian era. From 2016 onward, the subtle but increasing interest in the erasure of gender non-conforming individuals enacted by Trump and other Republican politicians made scholarship on the matter much more prevalent to maintain a current and historic social awareness of gender fluidity. To achieve this social awareness, the theatre and its processes need to be updated to promote the diversity of the human experience. Kemp asserts that "we need more dynamic tools for investigating and representing the figure of trans as both a passing and non-passing entity, a person who may be either dysphoric or coherent, a body that may be content or at odds with itself, a body that may be an object of desire or ridicule" (268). I agree with Kemp here that when choosing to cast any character, regardless if it is from Shakespeare or not, with a trans or gender non-conforming actor, you need to be cautious of that actor's personal experience with their gender expression. People who are not cisgender have a myriad of different experiences regarding their gender presentation and identification. This kind of awareness while casting will ensure that your actors

feel safe and secure in the role they were cast as, and you, as the director, have the opportunity to play with a layer of queerness where it was not before.

Regardless of the choice the director makes, it is up to them to make sure that actors who are not genderqueer playing a temporally queer character can portray the character without stigma. Vice versa is true as well: if you cast a trans or nonbinary person in a seemingly cisgender role, there need to be conversations regarding the constant inclusion of that actor. Kemp articulates that trans bodies have the right and the need to take up more space both in the production and the physical theatre itself. Similarly, they claim that trans bodies are “complex subjects of representation, and also to participate in the loop of conversation between performance and criticism, to participate in the meaning-making systems of gender, identity, and performance that the theater facilitates” (278). Involving the genderqueer actor in conversations regarding their place in a company both recognize the actor's agency to provide insight into their character as well as being able to facilitate discussions around how a potential gendered performance looks within a production. However, it is not and should not always have to be up to the genderqueer actor to be the educator for the production process; there also comes a level of interrogation and education the other actors in the company have to do, especially if any of them are coming into the production process with preconceived biases.

At this juncture, I have established early modern childhood as a specific location of queerness. Similarly, in connection with the transition into manhood, the relationship of the servant/apprentice and master also has the potential of homoerotic tendencies, with the young boys using their relative smoothness to coerce their masters with sexual favors. Playwrights then were aware of these areas of queerness and wrote them into their plays frequently alongside the heteronormative union of marriage. Furthermore, I have connected some of these theatrical

representations with that of the hermaphrodite and the various spectrums of performativity and identity. Now, I will unpack all of these dimensions of applying historical research in the present day to my three case studies from the early modern canon. Additionally, I planned to incorporate Anderson's work on echo with my understanding of echo as imitation with my case study characters as a mode of manipulation.

Chapter #2: Ariel, and Puck, and Snap (Oh My!)

Ariel's Mischievous Magic

My primary case study characters, specifically Ariel and Puck, stand out as magical characters that exist outside of the binary gender hierarchy in the plays they live in. And, to reframe the argument of this thesis, I aim to show the potential for gender ambiguity in performance based on the characters' personal experience with self-fashioning and their connection to the above queer concepts of the master and apprentice, early modern childhood, and the understanding of androgyny and hermaphroditism. Granted, as ethereal nonhuman characters, it can and should be challenging to prescribe the human construct of gender to Ariel and Puck, as the temporality would suggest. However, with an awareness that humankind has constantly functioned with specific sets of rules and responsibilities for each gender category, constructs of gender also appear in theatre and art. More often than not, these constructs exist in support of the patriarchy.

With gender norms set up for the success of the masculine, prejudice against the androgyne and the non-binary is rooted in misogyny (as well as misadndrogyny) and the fear of effeminization. Similarly, what it means to be a man often comes with much more freedom and access to wealth, education, and race. Unsurprisingly, *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* heavily function and rely on the set rules of gender to continue the plays' plot structure. Similarly, in each play, a masculine-coded character is either in charge of or directly controlling the actions of the gender-ambiguous character. As gender variance persists in these plays, whenever I refer to these two characters and other characters in the early modern canon that live in this same category, as I have done above, I will use gender-neutral pronouns (they/them/theirs). This specific pronoun usage will accomplish a few things simultaneously: 1)

it will allow Ariel and Puck to exist as products of their plays and reflections of the society in which they were first performed. 2) Ariel and Puck are allowed to exist within the temporality of queerness I have located, which will permit an investigation of these characters through the lens of trans studies. And 3) Ariel and Puck are still understood through the 400+ years of scholarship that attempts to understand them. From here, I turn to the text of *The Tempest* as actors begin with the text to translate everything it offers into performance. Similarly, this close examination will reveal how Ariel functions within the temporality of queerness as they utilize their infantilized status and proximity to humankindness to represent a hermaphrodized androgyne.

In the text of *The Tempest*, Prospero (the masculine-coded character in charge) never explicitly assigns a gender to Ariel. Whenever he speaks to or about the spirit, he refers to them as “spirit” or uses the name “Ariel.” Similarly, when Prospero refers to Ariel as “spirit,” he often attaches an adjective such as “brave,” “quaint,” “fine,” “delicate,” “dainty,” and “tricksy” (1.2.207, 1.2.318, 1.2.421/495, 1.2.442/4.1.49, 5.1.95, 5.1.226). As a reflection on Prospero's language toward Ariel, these selected adjectives suggest a purposeful avoidance of gender assignment; however, most adjectives he chooses are specifically feminine-coded, like “delicate” and “dainty.” The quality of lightness that these two specific adjectives invoke also reminds the viewer of Ariel's nature as an air and water spirit, which, in the world of humors, these elemental categories cross gender lines: men were connected to fire and air and women were connected to earth and water. With that, Prospero specifically points to Ariel's ability to fly when he calls them “my bird” (4.1.184) and “chick” (5.1.317), which to the modern audience, the word “chick” is heavily feminine-coded. These adjectives gesture toward Ariel's fluidity in physicality and presentation in their feminine self-fashioning. Ariel ebbs and flows in thought and action as an

air and water spirit and is a character that spends time thinking and processing, much like a human.

Kimbrough stresses this actualization of Ariel as, “Ariel the non-human has observed that to be human includes tenderness, mercy, remorse, sympathetic tears” (12). Kimbrough asserts that the materialization of a spirit is paradoxical, “but to be as fully as possible *like* a spirit is not” (9). Though Ariel is not human, as Kimbrough points out, they can still process and understand human nature within the context of *The Tempest* in their lines, “Your charm so strongly works ‘em / That, if you now beheld them, your affections / would become tender” and “Mine would, sir, were I human” (5.1.17-19/20). Though I disagree with Kimbrough's complete analysis of Ariel, which I will unpack later, I argue that Ariel’s ability to understand basic levels of humanity points to their heavy influence throughout the play and their interrogation of the actions of the play. Similarly, their human understanding signifies a much more significant presence both on stage and in the text, which could allow them to be perceived as more than just “air.” Prospero becomes more aware of Ariel’s proximity to humankindness in his response to them: “And mine shall. / Hast thou, which are but air, a touch, a feeling / Of their affections, and shall not myself / (One of their kind, that relish all as sharply, / Passion as they) be kindlier moved than thou art?” (5.1.20-24). Prospero’s astonishment at Ariel’s human understanding ultimately prompts him to release his captives. With that, I argue this action makes him set Ariel free because Prospero can see the wrongdoing he has done to his *kind* through Ariel’s understanding of humankindness.

Ariel is also fluid in appearance as they can easily change from spirit to harpy to sea-nymph to the visual representation of goddesses. Ariel’s fluidity, though not surprising for a magical, non-human character, plays a heavy role in Ariel’s frequent androgynous presentation in production as both male and female-identifying actors have taken on the role. The American

Shakespeare Center seems aware of Ariel's fluidity with casting actors Chris Johnston (2016), a male identifying actor and Corrie Green Moody (2022), a female identifying actor, to take on the role. However, Ariel, in their first line, states, "To thy strong bidding, task / Ariel and all [*his*] quality" (1.2.192-193). This line contains the only textual evidence of a gender marker for Ariel (other than two stage directions within the text that most scholars conclude were additions by editors as a look through the Norton Facsimile First Folio text reveals that stage directions involving Ariel just state the character's name (*The Norton Facsimile The Tempest*)). What is interesting about this pronoun usage is that when the gender signifier finally shows up, it is used by the character in the temporality of queerness. At first glance, this masculine pronoun usage could reflect how Ariel wishes to be viewed in the play. However, that does not entirely explain their feminine self-fashioning and the feminine adjectives Prospero continuously prescribes throughout the play. Kimbrough offers one last analysis of androgyny and how it may function, which is androgyny as accommodation. As Kimbrough suggests, "androgyny is accommodation—accommodation not as compromise and diminishment, but in the fullest, most positive sense of taking in, digesting, understanding, embracing, encompassing, building, growing" (13). Androgyny as accommodation, both literally and the way Kimbrough hypothesizes, is vital to my argument. As it connects to gender performativity, androgyny as accommodation asserts itself alongside the misandrogynistic mechanism of assimilation where code-switching your gender performance based on the specific environments is a way to both conform to the societal hierarchical structure as well as a protection mechanism for the self. Additionally, the latter half of Kimbrough's explanation of accommodation reflects Ariel's ability to observe and learn from the world around them.

Ariel's gender performance, then, frequently engages with androgyny as accommodation. First, gesturing to the masculine pronoun "his" could be used as accommodation in the form of compromise to the audience and the fear of gender subversion represented on stage. Similarly, the figures within the feminine sphere that Ariel chooses to embody are asked of them by Prospero. Here, their androgyny as accommodation serves Prospero's ultimate goal: to cause harm to those who wronged him, reclaim his dukedom, and find Miranda a suitable high-status husband. From this, one could suggest that Prospero appropriates Ariel's non-binary, androgynous identity to serve his ends, shifting accommodation as Kimbrough lays out into a sense of manipulation. This means that Prospero may heavily utilize the mechanism of both assignment and assimilation to force Ariel into enacting his will over the island.

I argue that the moment that Ariel's androgyny as accommodation functions as taking in and growing is when Ariel appears in the play unprompted by Prospero and uses that opportunity to observe what is going on. Furthermore, these moments of Ariel taking in information allow them to understand the human experience, therefore becoming closer in proximity to humankindness. Earlier in his book, Kimbrough claims, "magic was an art not above, below, or outside of nature, but was an art *of* nature, an art of discovery or invention... Magic was a branch of learning, an internalization and utilization of the principles of knowledge existing in nature, the uncovering of just enough knowledge to reveal the structures and functions of nature" (36). As an original inhabitant, Ariel is a direct part of the island's natural magic. With the help of his books, Prospero, once he frees Ariel from the pine tree, can utilize every aspect of natural magic. That's why Ariel is so important to Prospero. Ariel's natural magic combines with their proximity to humankindness as a visual bridge between the heavenly spiritual realm and the physical one; Ariel attempts to be the central point of the axes.

Although Ariel's use of the masculine pronoun challenges Ariel's ambiguity, it also promotes it due to scholarship brought forward by Horbury. They (meaning Horbury) connects our modern understanding of the trans/nonbinary experience with early modern concepts of the sex and gender spectrum, as the language we use in everyday practice today did not quite exist yet in the period with an idea they call "unhistoricist trans temporalities" (2). This language also shaped my use of the temporality of queerness. Transness and other forms of gender indeterminacy could be read onto characters from the period while simultaneously letting the characters exist as their own entity. Though the specific terminology did not exist, Horbury claims that there was a general understanding of transgender elements as "fantastic and potentially wondrous" (3) while at the same time being used for moments of comedy or phobia. As briefly mentioned above, the wonder Horbury gestures to could be about the miraculous and gender-ambiguous relationship and transformation of Phillida and Galatea in John Lyly's *Galatea*. Another level of queerness is placed in the performance of these two characters as this is a play where boy actors play young girls playing young boys. However, the use of trans ideas for comedy or phobia could refer to audiences' first response to Moll Cutpurse in Dekker and Middleton's *The Roaring Girl*. Though this character is based on a natural person, the concept of an independent woman having freedom of dress who ultimately chooses to wear men's apparel was new and often criticized. It is essential to recognize these figures as active examples of playwrights working with gender identity and gender variation. However, the figures listed above do not present the same opportunities for ambiguity and androgyny in the same way that Ariel and Puck do.

To connect the text of *The Tempest* with Horbury, they identify that the masculine-coded pronoun "he" was arbitrarily used to distinguish entities not explicitly identified as female (5).

This pronoun would also be arbitrarily used for the androgynous body, as gender expression often makes it difficult to pinpoint an accurate depiction of one's gender. As such, Ariel's use of the masculine pronoun might be an acknowledgment of their gender ambiguity as their self-fashioning continues to reflect the feminine sphere. Horbury continues to state that

To conclude that Ariel's use of 'his' grants Ariel a male gender is not only to ignore early modern pronoun usage but arbitrarily to privilege such pronoun use over Ariel's physically female forms, as well as insisting that Ariel should conform to human understandings of gender rather than the very different sphere of fairy gender. (5)

Though the intricacies of "fairy gender" are impossible to solidify concerning human gender, both *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* continue to function within patriarchal social norms. Therefore, Ariel continues to take up feminine space under the masculine ruling power, Prospero. Since the forms Ariel chooses to embody exist within a feminine sphere, there is a direct rift with any preconceived gender ideologies attached to the character, gesturing towards their fluidity in expression. Interestingly, early modern depictions of transness seem to carry with them a sense of the supernatural in the guise of cross-gender ambiguity.

Kimbrough, though having a wealth of theory around androgyny, does not align Ariel as an androgyne, even though there is an apparent similarity between Ariel and genderless angels as both can fly and bridge the gap between the heavenly world and the physical one. Instead, Kimbrough asserts that "Ariel is not human (has no body, no sex) but a spirit, yet a spirit in form and substance because of the physical reality of Prospero. They are one in the same, while separate and different. Ariel is (in him/her/itself) the realization of Prospero's knowledge, and Ariel is, in turn, the actualization of Prospero's power" (151). This analysis of Ariel's role and function in the play is incredibly limiting. First, Ariel existed on the island long before Prospero

and Miranda and before the witch Sycorax. Restricting Ariel's existence as only possible through Prospero negates any claim to the island they have and misrepresents the character's careful thoughts and actions throughout the play. Secondly, I argue that though Ariel is a spirit, there has to be some element of physicality attributed to them that also had to exist pre-Prospero and Sycorax, or else how could they a) become trapped in a tree and b) manifest themselves in the multiple, (and I argue) explicitly physical forms that people react to in the play? The characters might not explicitly see their manifestation of the sea nymph, but the other characters in the play specifically react to their manifestation of the harpy and banquet goddesses. Though I find Kimbrough's analysis limiting, there is a conversation to be had about the physical presence and reality of Ariel and patriarchal/misogynistic/misandrogynistic hierarchies.

As discussed earlier, Prospero utilizes the mechanisms of assignment and assimilation to assign Ariel a specific embodied task. Kimbrough continues by claiming, "Ariel as an extension knows the master; they think alike because they think Prospero's thought. It is natural that Ariel would and could serve as a conscience" (151). Limiting Ariel's thoughts and actions to just Prospero's conscience directly troubles Ariel's desire for freedom. Ariel and Prospero cannot and do not think the same thoughts symbiotically because the spirit's freedom would not even be in conversation. Furthermore, I would argue that Ariel does know Prospero as an almost adoptive father figure rather than an extension of conscience. With their knowledge of Prospero and what it means to be human, they can use that knowledge to tap into Prospero's emotions and remind him of his humanity.

There are two moments in *The Tempest* where I argue that Ariel interferes with the play's action without being explicitly asked to. In 2.1, Ariel shows up where the shipwrecked characters (Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, and others) are making camp. They come in with somber

music that makes all but Antonio and Sebastian fall asleep. Ariel exits and returns later in the scene with more music designed explicitly for Gonzalo, which Prospero asks of them with their line: “My master through his art foresees the danger / That you, his friend, are in” (2.1.298-99). This encounter is reminiscent of angelic encounters, giving messages of good luck and/or prophecy about the future. This angelic association also reflects a gentle nature in Ariel as they relay this message while Gonzalo and the others are asleep, even if it be by magical charm. In 3.2, Ariel shows up invisible to Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo and observes them while Caliban tries to use the two clowns to conquer Prospero. Ariel takes this moment to enact some magic as mischief, much like Puck, as they seem to take on Trinculo's voice as a kind of echo. Here, gesturing back to Anderson's work, I argue Ariel is using echo as imitation but not as a direct reciprocation of the previous lines spoken. Instead, this enactment of echo as imitation in the form of mimicry and voice copying to mess around with the conversation and gather more information about what Caliban and the others are up to. Once Caliban reveals his plan to the clowns, Ariel, in an aside, says, “This will I tell my master” (3.2.115) and then plays music again to startle the clowns and get the three to head to a different location. Ariel utilizes echo in this moment as an act of mischief and I argue that they use their curiosity to consciously choose to mess with Caliban and the others and inform Prospero of the information they eavesdropped on.

However, at the end of Act 1, Prospero has two lines that explicitly have Ariel doing what Prospero tells them. These lines are “Follow me; – / Hark what thou else shalt do me” and “Thou shalt be free / As mountain winds, but then exactly do / All points of my command” (1.2.495-496/499-501). As such, both moments where Ariel appears without explicitly being told to by Prospero could be interpreted as different points of his “command” they are enacting. I would continue to argue for the two moments as one that their own free will could have

prompted. The only real moment in the play where Ariel faces direct discipline is when they ask for their freedom from the master/servant relationship in 1.2. Though Prospero ends up fulfilling that act of freeing Ariel by the end of the play, which he promised when their relationship began before the actions of the play, he reinstalls the reasons for Ariel's debt to him. As I have discussed, the eventual act of release of Ariel could reflect Prospero's realization of Ariel's proximity to humankindness in the form of being able to think about the choices of the human characters they interact with as well as his reflection of himself concerning his wrongdoings to his kind.

When thinking about Ariel as a character within the temporality of queerness, it is essential to discuss John Dryden and William D'Avenant's play, *The Tempest*, as another variation of both the character and the queer readings behind them. Although their version of the play was published in 1670, long after Shakespeare's death, the storyline of this collaboration is practically identical to Shakespeare's as the essential elements of the plot are present and utilized. Unsurprisingly, however, the duo took on a few more liberties in the story. For example, several new characters not found in the original play are added. These include Miranda's sister Dorinda, Caliban's sister Sycorax, and another random boy that Prospero takes care of in a cave on the island, Hippolito. Though these extra characters reflect changing practices in stagecraft as more women in the Restoration period were allowed to perform professionally, these new characters do not necessarily add anything more to the story; they seem relatively excessive to the primary original plot of the story.

The use of these new characters seems to function as the freedom to explore potential sexual deviance. In contrast, the role and primary goal of Ariel remains the same as before: to serve Prospero until their liberty has been granted or acquired somehow. Before continuing, the

scene citing present in my analysis of this text, as well as that of *The Night Walker*, were tracked by me. The versions of the texts I look at only have act separation, so some French scene work was needed. Now back to the play, Ariel's use of language and song is also incredibly similar and almost identical to that of Shakespeare, even down to the use of the male pronoun "his" arbitrarily with their line "to thy strong bidding, task Ariel and all [*his*] qualities" (1.2.2). Similarly, Prospero uses specific adjectives that exist in the feminine sphere once again, like: "gentle," "quaint" (1.2.2), "dainty" (3.1.3, 5.2.5), "dear," and "fine" (3.3.2). With this similar use of feminine-coded words used by Prospero to describe Ariel in line with their arbitrary use of the masculine pronoun, Ariel's feminine self-fashioning and gender ambiguity jump out both in Shakespeare's work and Dryden and D'Avenant's.

Though the language about and function of Ariel is similar to Shakespeare, Dryden and D'Avenant make a few exciting choices textually for the spirit that draws them closer to Kimbrough's analysis of androgyny as an understanding of humankindness. At the end of Act 4, Dryden and D'Avenant give the spirit a soliloquy, both physically giving more voice to Ariel and their function in the play as well as a visualization of their thinking, feeling, and understanding the wrongdoings that they have potentially helped with. In this soliloquy, they recount Prospero's actions and how they have affected the people now imprisoned, so to speak, on the island. They also interrogate their captivity in a more dynamic way than Shakespeare's Ariel when they say

Even I not made of warring Elements

Partake and suffer in these discontents.

Why shou'd a mortal by Enchantments hold

In chains a spirit of aetherial mould?

Accursed Magick we our selves have taught

And our own pow'r has our subjection wrought! (4.3.5)

Ariel's direct interrogation of their captivity reveals their personal feelings and frustrations with being in service. They inform the audience here that they are not made of "warring Elements," which, in the context of the rest of the soliloquy, could be about the human characters battling for domain over the island and the other human qualities. This wording reminds the audience of Ariel's non-humanness while framing their issues and struggles alongside those of the humans they interact with. With the reminder of their non-humanness, Ariel then reframes themselves as the visual representation of the hermaphrodized androgyne. They also inform us that though the island's magic is "accursed," they also hold the power to try to do something about it. I also argue that Ariel's treatment towards Hippolito in this text is a place where Ariel takes action without being asked in a way that uses "our own power," or a kind of magical mischief, for good in reviving a near-dead person. I believe they visited the body of Hippolito in the first place because they felt guilty about their "neglect" of him.

To continue, we have established the spectrum of interstice with androgyny and hermaphroditism, the idealized heavenly impossibility and the "monstrous" physical reality, and representations of such to function as a bridge between the natural world and the supernatural world. As Ariel functions as this bridge, it makes sense for them to see and interact with other spirits and the physical world. With that, if the union of Miranda and Ferdinand represents both the union of the sexes and the completion of Prospero's master plan, the relationship between Dorinda and Hippolito, whether Prospero wants it that way or not, may also function as a secondary master plan. Prompted by the potential guilt, Ariel quite literally goes across heaven and earth to save the soul of Hippolito. This "unbid" choice by Ariel in conversation with their

earlier soliloquy shows their proximity to humankindness in their desire to fix what has happened and their magical ability to *do* something about it.

For Dryden and D'Avenant, this revival act textually makes Prospero decide to free Ariel because he can see the errors of his ways through them. The two collaborators make another textual choice that brings Ariel closer to humankindness in the form of potential sexualization. Once Prospero releases them, they exclaim, "I have a gentle Spirit for my Love, / Who twice seven years hath waited for my Freedom, / It shall appear and foot it featly with me. / *Milcha*, my Love, thy *Ariel* calls thee" to which Milcha appears (5.2.5). With the notion of androgyny as accommodation that Kimbrough brings up, this could very quickly be played as a heterosexually reestablished relationship with Ariel (who used a male pronoun at the beginning of their time on stage) reuniting with a character with a more female sounding name. In that same vein, as I gestured to above, it opens the door for this androgynized character to have physical and sexual experiences which, if framed as a heterosexual couple, could be, yet again, the visual representation of the androgynized union of the sexes, regardless how aetherial beings reproduce. Ariel does use a pronoun for Milcha, which keeps both characters within the realm of queerness: "it," which many in the LGBTQ+ community today have reclaimed as a word of identity rather than a history of harm. With that, if Horbury is correct that a woman could have played Ariel as early as the Restoration, it makes sense then that this Restoration Ariel could be played as a woman as well, which would render a heterosexual union between Ariel and Milcha impossible if both roles were performed by women and embodied as feminine. Interestingly, the union of spirits could be a reflection of the heteronormative union of marriage if Ariel is performed as more masculine and Milcha is more feminine by comparison.

So why should we care about any of this in the first place? How does a second version of Ariel change or affect their stability or instability under the temporality of queerness? As I hope I have parsed through so far, Ariel as a character is constantly looked through under different lenses of embodied gendered performance. As a fictional being, the performance of such a character is mainly up to what the actor and director want to do with it to serve their version of the play for their specific production process. However, before making concrete statements, I must reflect on the information I have gathered to make the most informed choice possible.

Firstly, when determining where to go in Ariel's performance, one must consider their proximity to humankindness. As the character seems to move into a place of basic human understanding from the beginning of the play, by the end, their influence on the play around them becomes more heightened and involved, making their tactics and goals for their arc more visible in both Shakespeare's text as well as this one. With that, and rubbing against Kimbrough a little, Ariel has to take up some form of physical presence rather than a manifestation of Prospero's conscience. Without a physical reality for Ariel, the reality of the figures they embody would be diminished as an embodied performance differs from an illusion. This separation of Ariel as natural rather than conscience makes their proximity to humankindness all the more jarring for Prospero as it is a spirit that reminds him of his humankindness and to be more gentle with the people he has placed a spell under regardless of their past treatment towards him; mainly because of how close he is to getting to the completion of his plan in the union of Ferdinand and Miranda. With the additional union of Dorinda and Hippolito in the Dryden/D'Avenant text, Ariel shows that they are willing to go across heaven and earth to save someone as a response to the human emotion of guilt.

Similarly, as discussed earlier, Ariel seems to function in the realm of androgyny as accommodation more frequently than any other form as they choose the pronoun “he” to accommodate for the set gender hierarchy potentially held by audience members. They also exist in accommodation as their fluidity allows them to incorporate themselves into any environment they are in, whether used to spy on the clowns or to create the likeness of Greek goddesses, much like the original character. However, though we do not know how old the spirit is, thinking of Ariel as a curious, childish fairy makes the discoveries they find in the play much more important for understanding the world around them. This analysis makes the Dryden/D’Avenant soliloquy an almost groundbreaking discovery for the character.

To create a fuller picture of Ariel as the ideal embodiment of nonbinary androgynous potential thus far, I first established their resistance to gendered pronouns in the text in contrast with their frequent choices of feminine-coded forms in their physical transformations in connection to Horbury’s use of arbitrary gender identification. Similarly, this feminine self-fashioning is associated with Butler and Mangan’s work on gender performativity, specifically in terms of performances of unmasculinity. With that comes the connections that Gilbert and Kimbrough lay on the early modern period’s understanding of the androgyne and hermaphrodite and how Ariel’s ambiguity becomes a representation of the hermaphroditic androgyne as they bridge the gap between the physical world and the spiritual one. From there, I have touched on the hierarchical structure present in Prospero, a masculine-coded character having command over Ariel, a spirit with childlike wonder in connection to Burnett’s discussions of masters and servants. With that, the variations within the Restoration *Tempest* seem to add layers of readable queerness to the character. Now that I have unpacked several ways Ariel exists within the temporality of queerness, I will now shift to discuss my second case study character,

Puck, as their mischief and magic and their proximity to humankindness have a similar function as Ariel's. Additionally, with my graph visualization, I argue that Puck as a figure represents an androgynized hermaphrodite whose performance tends towards a more masculine association.

Puck's Magical Mischief

Puck has been far less talked about under the same lens, although they share heavy similarities with Ariel. With that in mind, the majority of this section of analysis and argument will be informed by my close reading of the text and informed by all of the previous information above. Before going into a bit of scholarship around the character, I would like to do my analysis of Puck, similar to the above analysis of Ariel. First of all, we have similar use of the masculine pronoun "he" as Ariel does with "his" in the First Fairy's line, "Are not you he / That frights the maids of villagery..." and put simply again, "Are not you he?" (2.1.34-35/42). These are the only two moments within the text of *Dream* that assign a gender to Puck; this time, it is someone else's projection of gender. When talking to them, however, Oberon switches between Robin and Puck and refers to the fairy as "gentle" on two separate occasions (2.1.148/4.1.63). The word "gentle" has the potential to align itself with a more feminine-coded nature, though there is a connection to be said about "gentle" referring to "gentlemen" and the "gentry."

Though using the masculine pronoun, the fairy also attaches a feminine adjective to Puck in the line "Those that Hobgoblin call you, and [sweet] Puck" (2.1.40). Similar to Ariel, we know that Puck can shape-shift and appear as whatever they see fit, which is present in their line "Sometime a horse I'll be, sometime a hound / A hog, a headless bear, sometime a fire" (3.1.104-105). Concerning the elemental humors, if Ariel is the combination of air and water, Puck here is the combination of earth and fire. Unlike Ariel, we never see Puck take on the

embodiment of these creatures, though productions may choose to have the actor playing the fairy act out and physically embody one of the creatures mentioned (like Rick Blunt in the ASC's 2015 production) and interestingly, the creatures they say come with more masculine undertones. In examining the text, there is a heavy sense of gender instability. Curiously, Puck seems to align more with the masculine attributes of gender rather than the feminine ones to which Ariel appears to attach themselves in connection to their boyish mischief and background in folklore.

Arden editor Sukanta Chaudhuri and scholar Laurie Johnson provide some background knowledge on Puck and their origins and a general understanding of the nature of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Both Chaudhuri and Johnson make clear that the representation of the fairy world is taken from sources predating Shakespeare, claiming that “*Dream* evokes elements of supernatural lore from many periods and brings philosophical traditions to bear on the popular belief of the time” (Chaudhuri 47). Because of the wide net of influence, the literal personification of the fairy character Robin Goodfellow is one that Shakespeare's audience would have been aware of. Chaudhuri flags several plays or other forms of literature that contain some depiction of the character, such as the Johnsonian court masque *Love Restor'd* and a broadside ballad titled *The Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Goodfellow*. With the heavy use of the character trope in folklore and literature, if the character is culturally loaded, then I argue the different types of folklore or other mediums of influence could be represented through the actualization of the character. Johnson identifies several “puck-words” from various folklore from which Shakespeare drew and are classified as a spirit or sprite: ‘puki’ in Iceland, ‘piskey’ in Devon, the Cornish ‘pixie,’ Worcestershire’s ‘poake,’ Ireland’s ‘pooka,’ the Welsh ‘pwcca,’ and possibly the Scottish ‘pawkey’ (160). Several “puck” spirits are characterized by their mischievous tendencies and behavior. As the above ballad title gestures to, Puck and the

character of Robin Goodfellow is that of a tricky sprite that enjoys playing pranks and games. Chaudhuri also provides some cultural insight, stating that Puck “is compounded of many items of English fairy mythology, of both Celtic and Teutonic origin” (44) and, regardless of origin, continues to be seen as a mischievous entity. These multiple origins for the character reveal the valence of both the word “puck” and how representations of the character can take on numerous variations of different embodiments, much like performances of gender. To continue, with a general cultural consciousness of one of the variations of the “puck” figure, there comes the potential for a performance riddled with cultural iconography and gender variation for an audience to react to directly.

However, the *OED* provides several definitions of “puck” that place the character and associations with them in a malicious or evil connotation. These definitions include: “an evil, malicious, or mischievous spirit or demon of popular belief” (1.a), “The Devil; Satan” (1.b) and “A name given to a mischievous sprite or goblin believed to haunt the countryside” (1.c). The last of the three definitions explicitly references Robin Goodfellow in association with the term which is where the connection between the character as seen in *Dream* and the cultural loading of which is most evident. The question to unpack here is why is there a malicious association with this character and how does that affect the performance of them on stage? As a counterpoint to these definitions, the fear of the early modern fairy and “puck-like” creatures stems directly from the fear of the unknown. Fairies, both in how they function in the play and in regular life, enacted their mischief while invisible to the human eye. Therefore, any potential malicious intent attributed to the creatures might just be a misinterpretation of the situation at hand. Additionally on stage, I argue that the “puck” as a visible figure to the audiences perceives themselves as more of a prankster with a specific curiosity towards the human world. Visually, the performance of

Puck in this context connects directly to Horbury's notion of repurposing the violence of the fairies into a kind of childish mischief and curiosity.

In conversation with potential punishment, the child-like behavior of the early modern fairy exists in conversation with the concept of master/servant relationships. Though as a subset of the category, the early modern fairy takes on a subservient role under a typically male-coded character who also wields magic. The mischief of the magic of the fairy in service becomes a specific mode of magic use that can be defined as a direct order or in a curious nature. As I have already mentioned, the relationship between Ariel and Prospero falls into this subset category, as well as the relationship between Puck and Oberon from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The difference between the two characters is that Ariel's magical mischief comes out of direct order most of the time while having the agency to choose for themselves the form in which they feel fits the situation (the banquet goddesses are an excellent example of this) as Puck's mischievous magic comes from their trickery and child-like curiosity as well as direct order. In these moments of mischief, though Ariel and Puck face discipline from their master, the mischief never stops; it is adjusted. The shaping of the mischief Horbury states "ensure[s] that the correct sort of mischief is performed" (4) for the master's aims within the structure of the play. This dynamic is interesting to examine as Ariel and Puck experience the phenomenon in similar but separate ways. Almost all the mischief and magic from Ariel are brought about by Prospero's will, leaving very little room for correction because they are in line with Prospero's master plan.

Similarly, the masculine-coded Prospero and Oberon share a connection to masculine modes of magical practice. Timbers informs, "male magicians of higher social status...stressed the theoretical and learned aspects of magic and incorporated magical techniques and symbols into male-dominated institutions such as medicine, religion, and freemasonry" (3). Prospero lives

in this category, as does Subtle from Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* and Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, as he is an educated male figure with a higher status. Sure, Prospero was banished, but that does not change his proximity to the social hierarchy. Oberon is different because he is not a human character. His proximity to the social hierarchy is present, but I think it functions differently in the fairy world. However, the fairies of this play, namely Oberon, Titania, and Puck, all come closer to an understanding of humankindness as the fairy king and queen both experience forms of the human emotion of jealousy.

Meanwhile, Puck's mischief manifests itself more frequently outside the specific task they have been given. In their first scene, we are made aware of their mischievous nature through their conversation with the fairy (2.1.32-57) and how they find joy in messing around with people, and potentially just creatures in general, and jest to Oberon. Puck follows the command of Oberon when he asks them to fetch the flower of purple dye for him to place the spell on Titania (2.1.155-185) and, though they mistake the man in Athenian dress, follow Oberon's order to anoint the eyes of the disdainful youth who does not love the Athenian maid (2.1.259-267). Puck's mischief, I argue, begins with their mistake of Lysander for Demetrius. Even though the error is valid because of the vagueness of Oberon's command, the joy they find later in 3.2, where both Lysander and Demetrius become head over heels for Helena, could be read as a happy accident for Puck. The real mischief happens in 3.1 when they seemingly stumble upon the mechanicals and their rehearsal. Observing Bottom's behavior in the rehearsal space, Puck deliberately transforms him by giving him the head of a donkey. With this transformation, by happenstance, their creation becomes the thing Titania becomes infatuated with. Because of their already established enjoyment of mischief, their excitement and joy in informing Oberon that "My mistress with a monster is in love" (3.2.6) is evident. Puck is then chastised for their

mistake but never actually punished for their actions. From my analysis, Puck stands out as a character in a kind of homosocial service to a masculine-coded character and reflects a child-like curiosity in their mischievous tendencies throughout the play. Similarly, the character is culturally charged with various sources in European folklore, meaning that the character is inherently prescribed with several readable meanings when performed on the early modern stage. With that, though Puck's performance within the temporality does seem to lean toward a more masculine aesthetic, in comparison with Ariel, I believe there is room to play around with different gender performatives to enact the character.

To continue, there is a moment in 3.2 of *Dream* where I argue Puck enacts a kind of echo as imitation/mimicry. However, instead of it just being a few words interjecting to mess with a conversation, it is a full-on act of voice throwing, mimicry, and confusion to keep Lysander and Demetrius far enough from each other to not kill each other but close enough to get them both in the same location and put under the same sleep spell. Puck, like Ariel, uses voice copying as an act of mischief to mess with both Lysander and Demetrius, taking on the vocal likeness of both lovers. I also argue that in their likeness as Lysander, they choose words like "coward," "recreant," and "child" to get under Demetrius' skin (3.2.431-35). The specific word choice shows Puck's understanding of and proximity to humankindness in knowing what buttons to push.

Through my analysis, Puck aligns most with the representation of childish mischief compared to Ariel. Another difference between the two spirits is that Puck's master/servant relationship is one with another fairy rather than a spirit serving a mortal human. Ariel then naturally exists closer to humankindness. Though the nature of their relationship should affect both Oberon and Puck's proximity to humankindness, it is Puck's curiosity and Oberon's

jealousy that are the most potent character traits that drive the fairies toward an attempt at human understanding. As a knavish sprite, Puck has always been interested in humans, and, as he informed the First Fairy, they are fond of playing games and tricks with and on them. Oberon's want for the changeling boy Titania and the past known history of both Oberon and Titania's affairs with the mortal realm make the fairy king feel jealousy. This jealousy also directly causes the fairy world to be out of balance, making Oberon's feeling of jealousy as potentially unnatural. Another distinction between Ariel and Puck is that Ariel's mischievous nature serves their want for freedom. Puck does not seem to have a specific goal outside of Oberon's tasks for them and their assistance in fixing their mistake, and their like for curious chaos.

Through my argument and investigation thus far, I have established Puck and Ariel as characters under the temporality of queerness. Specifically, I claim that they carry the potential for androgynous performance due to the early modern understanding of the androgyne and hermaphrodite and their association with the queerness of early modern childhood. Similarly, I argue that their interest in and proximity to humankindness places them (in my graph metaphor) as variations of the hermaphroditized androgyne (or vice versa). From there, I have shown how the function of these two characters connects to the master/apprentice relationship and how each character mobilizes their infantilized status to achieve their goals within their plays. Lastly, I have demonstrated how their childish mischief functions within a kind of echo as imitation, as they both utilize mimicry when interacting with certain characters. As my case study continues, I plan to connect my assertions in the function of Ariel and Puck to that of the human character Snap in Fletcher and Shirley's *The Night Walker*.

The Apprentice as Master, *The Night Walker*

From the analysis of Ariel and Puck, there is much to be said about nonhuman characters existing inside the temporality of queerness in terms of androgynous potential. However, is there room to apply this temporality to a character that is 1) non-Shakespearean and 2) human? In the case of John Fletcher and James Shirley's *The Night-Walker*, I think there is room to investigate other plays of the period for similarities and differences under the lens of the temporality of queerness. To do this, there comes the understanding that now that I am working specifically with a human character, the "mischief and magic" they create or enact inherently differ from the two fairy characters. However, what drew me to this discussion is how a specific human character functions similarly to Ariel and Puck in servitude, self-fashioning, and utilization of echo.

The 1640 title page reads *The Night-Walker; or, The Little Thief a Comedy as It Was Presented by Her Majesties Servants at the Private House in Drury-Lane*. Based on the publication date, the "Her Majesty" in question would have been Queen Henrietta Maria, queen to Charles I. Andrew Gurr and his study of *The Shakespearean Stage* provides some useful information about this company and their explicit association with this queen as the well-known Queen Henrietta's Men, for which Shirley became a house dramatist until being replaced by Richard Brome (Gurr 31). However, it is important to note that this collaboration play began with the play Fletcher wrote initially, with Shirley revising the work much later; what is present in the version discussed in this thesis is most definitely different from the original. Among the several talented actors was a small batch of boy apprentice actors that would have most certainly played female and other unmasculine/androgynous characters in the repertory (Gurr 81). My real investigation into the text of *The Night-Walker* led me to the character Boy (or Snap as they call

themselves and/or Alathe as they reveal by the end). The different names are essential to the plot as, *spoiler alert*, their primary goal throughout the story is to get back at and back with a man who wronged them. The performance of this character in *The Night Walker* is inherently queer, as the original performance of the character would be a young boy playing a young girl disguised as a young boy. This multi-level of queer interpretation makes Snap (as I primarily choose to call them/what they call themselves) a perfect candidate for my argument and analysis thus far, as the youths of the playhouse might have also enacted Ariel and Puck.

In Act 1, Snap presents themselves to a thief named Tom Lurcher (abbreviated in the speech prefix as Lur. or Lurch.) and asks to serve him. Though they refer to themselves as a “poor distressed Boy” (1.2.1), per the overall disguise of the character, Snap never explicitly attaches the male pronouns he/him/his to their performance of gender within the play the way that Ariel does but instead accepts the masculine gender as a way in which their character is read by others, like Puck. As such, they seem to be the only character in this play without a fixed attributed gender. Lurcher is the only character that chooses to attach the male pronoun to Snap and is very quick to comment on their more feminine attributes as soon as the two begin to interact. Lurcher mentions they are a “pretty boy, but too mild of breeding, / too tender and too bashful a behavior” (1.2.1). In this one line, we see the use of four words (pretty, mild, tender, and bashful) that immediately place Lurcher’s perception of Snap into the feminine sphere, which, ultimately, is their goal. He mentions how Snap talks, noting that “[*He*] blushes as [*he*] speaks, and that I like not, / I love a bold and secure confidence” (1.2.1). These lines show Lurcher’s hesitancy in taking Snap in as an apprentice thief in response to their behavior and begin to reveal the specific qualifications he is looking for.

Lurcher states plainly to Snap that he “would have [*his*] boy impudent, / Out-face all truth, yet do it piously: / Like *Proteus*, cast [*himself*] into all forms, / As sudden and as nimble as [*his*] thoughts” (1.2.1). Here, Lurcher explicitly asks that his boy be a master of disguise, willing and able to change how he looks to assist him. “Sudden” and “nimble” used here could signify the young boy's body's ability to do specific tasks and reflect the quick nature that Puck and Ariel also carry. In this case, one could say that disguise is Snap's version of echo as imitation/mimicry since they camouflage themselves and use the mannerisms of others to fool their victims. Since Snap is already operating in disguise, this is not a complex request for them to work out. Lurcher continues to tell Snap that if they can do this, “I would keep thee / And cherish thee, hadst thou any active quality, / And be a tender Master to thy knavery” (1.2.1). This comment implies that Lurcher, like Prospero (and a connection to the master/apprentice relationship), is willing to provide care to them if they can perform and complete his tasks to the best of their ability. Snap gets under the wing of Lurcher, winning him over with their willingness and informing him that, “I have a thousand faces to deceive, / And to those twice so many tongues to flatter, / An impudence, no brass was ever tougher” (1.2.1) informing him that though they have feminine qualities about them, they are willing and able to assist in Lurcher's mischief with strength and a level of intelligence that impresses him.

Interestingly, Snap's above language resembles Puck's with the First Fairy. While discussing their nature and abilities, Snap conveys similar excitement when recounting their abilities to Lurcher. With that, once they inform Lurcher that Snap is the name they would like to be called (though Lurcher, and the play itself, continues just to call them Boy), he says, “‘Tis most natural, / A name born to thee, sure thou art a Fairie, / Shew but thy skill, and I shall make thee happie.” (1.2.1). Lurcher does not seem to be affected by the possibility that Snap could be a

fairy. More so, he welcomes the potential, informing them that as long as they can do the tasks, much like Prospero, he will take care of them and keep them “happie.” This reaction also reflects the temperance and affection rather than fear and panic Ariel receives from Prospero. Once the two are officially a duo, Lurcher becomes the masculine-coded master over the feminine-coded apprentice.

Disguise, then, becomes the mode in which Snap enacts their “mischief and magic” in the world of this play. Lurcher tasks Snap to scope out the house they plan to rob, and they do so, reporting to him all of the things they observe in Act 2. He chooses this task as Justice Algripe, owner of the house, bought out the land he used to live on. During Snap’s careful recollection of the state of the house, Lurcher says, “my dainty Boy” (2.1.1), a word we have seen used to describe Ariel in the context of them completing their task well. As discussed earlier, “dainty” keeps the character’s actions in the feminine sphere. Snap continues to align themselves as similar to Ariel in how they can influence the main plan of the male character in charge as both characters have their own underlying goals driving their actions. For Ariel, ultimately, it is freedom from this life of service and Prospero. For Snap, as I mentioned earlier, is to reunite with the man they love who left them, which is actually the Justice Algripe. One of the ways they use their wisdom and knowledge of the situation and the people involved is to be incredibly careful while looting. They say, “Pray be wise sir, doe’t handsomely, be not greedy, / Lets handle it with such an excellence / As if we would bring thieving into honour.” (2.1.1). They continue to use careful and specific language regarding how the mischief and knavery should be performed, similar to how apprentices were able to use their voices, or often violence, to get the things they need for the completion of their goal, which is to get back with Justice Algripe, who they are actively stealing from.

Because of their influence and the little success the duo has in the play, Snap almost becomes the one leading while Lurcher follows; it is a subverted or inverted echo. This subversion in the hierarchical structure allows them to make choices and decisions like a master would subtly, and Lurcher seems utterly oblivious to it. As my character analysis has tracked so far, though Snap has characteristics similar to Puck and Ariel's role in the play, their ambitious tactics and intelligence set them apart as their primary goal is a more driving force within the play's arc. To add on, and once again similar to Ariel, they can choose the different "forms" or disguises that best fit the situation. Still in Act 2, the duo, with others, discover that the chest they try to steal is a coffin with the body of Maria, the "dead" wife to Justice Algripe by accident. When they go to bury the coffin, Lurcher notices that the Justice and his Servingman are nearby, and Snap says, "I know him too, let me alone." This statement is their decision to enact the performance of the ghost of Maria immediately after they say this line, as the Servingman exclaims, "Oh sir, a Ghost, the very Ghost of Mistresse Bride" (2.3.1). This performance is engaging on several levels. Firstly, because of the queerness already established in a boy actor playing a female role disguised as a boy, their performance of Maria adds a fourth level of potential gendered performance and social interpretation.

In Snap's performance of Maria's ghost, they enact a moment of an echo at the beginning of their interaction with the Justice as he says, "Cursed Ghost, blesse me, preserve me, / ... If thou beest / The spirit of my wife" as Snap as the ghost replies "Thy wife" (2.3.1). Though the actual echo lasts for a short period, the visual recalling of Maria and the twist in their reply show the use of echo as imitation and reinvention/animation. Snap as the ghost begins to mimic the language of Ariel as harpy as both characters in their performance remind their target of past wrongdoings. For Ariel as harpy, they remind Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio of their past

wrongs, “From Milan did supplant good Prospero, / Exposed unto the sea” (*The Tempest* 3.3.88-89). For Snap, it is the reminder of the wrong the Justice did to them, saying, “Among thy other sinnes which blacke thy soule, / Call to thy minde thy vow made to another, / Whom thou hast wrong’d, and make her satisfaction” (*The Night Walker* 2.3.1). Both performances also include moments of cataplexis in the language where the ghost and harpy curse their target somehow. Something cool that differs for Snap is that Lurcher joins the scheme by adding “Away” to spook the Justice and Servingman as his man responds, “There are more spirits” (*The Night Walker*, 2.3.1). Prospero shows up after Ariel’s performance as well. However, his presence is one in response to something he had planned rather than in response to something created on the fly for Snap. With that, Snap continues to position themselves in the subtle role of master to put their goals slightly above those of Lurcher while still carrying a sense of servitude towards him, which helps Lurcher get what he’s after by the end of the play as well.

Among other moments of disguise, there is one in Act 4, where Snap uses their magic of disguise to influence or change the happenings of the scene. I argue that this is another moment in the text where their mischief and magic in the form of echo as disguise is utilized throughout the play. In Act 4, the Justice is attacked by two “hellhounds” (which, from my reading, are most likely Lurcher and others wearing some kind of cloak) ready to take him down to hell for his misdeeds. Earlier in the act, before this moment, Snap tells Lurcher, “Youle give me leave to play sir.” (4.2.2). The word choice aligns the character with a childlike nature in their request to “play,” and, I argue, could be a moment where Snap uses actual magic if the hellhounds are actual hellhounds. Snap comes in like an Angel to send the hellhound furies back from where they came, establishing a visual connection to the natural and supernatural; therefore, Snap as an Angel is the personification of the hermaphroditic androgyne. Looking at this moment in the text

is interesting because though the Angel commands “Malicious furies hence” (4.2.2), there is no marking of an exit for the furies. With no indication of the furies exiting, if Snap was an Angel and possessed actual magic, they could be actual conjurations of their own making; meaning they could just vanish with Snap’s command. With that, their performance of an Angel, and as a good portion of this play takes place in the dark, needs to be convincing enough to fool the Justice to get him to confess his wrongdoings and repent from them.

Because of this, magic as disguise, and therefore magic as echo, has to take place to enact this performance. Snap’s recount to Lurcher of the events succeeding their performance as the Angel could be performed with a similar inflection of excitement to Puck’s recall of Titania loving an ass as both Lurcher and Oberon are relatively pleased with the actions of their “servant”. By the end of the play, however, we see Snap admit that they are the maid that the Justice wronged, Alathe, and the two reunite. They also explain to Lurcher how they have been actively manipulating situations and using their influence on Lurcher to “divert” his foul intended deeds into fair ones. Interestingly, though the performance of Snap/Alathe is inherently queer (a boy actor playing a girl disguised as a boy), they become both the visual depiction of androgynized hermaphroditism while securing themselves in the union of the sexes; Snap/Alathe, then, enacts both versions of androgyny.

Snap/Alathe, as a human character, shares similarities with the non-human characters of Puck and Ariel within their specific play function. These similarities can be found in the text of *The Night-Walker* regarding the language used around Snap, whether that be the arbitrary use of masculine pronouns or characters using feminine-coded descriptors for them. With that, Snap shares a connection to Puck and Ariel in the role of servitude as all three are in some kind of service of a masculine-coded character; which connects with the homosocial potential of the

master and apprentice relationship. To continue, the two specific moments of self-fashioning I touch on are both enactments of supernatural creatures, each with their performative feminine potential: the ghost as a reanimation of Maria and the gender ambiguity of depictions of Angels. To continue, their utilization of echo as the ghost of Maria recalls the past, reanimates a version of Maria, and shows Snap's mischief as magic in the form of disguise. They can mobilize their more infantilized status and use echo as imitation/mimicry/disguise to become a subtle but driving force over Lurcher.

Conclusion: “Think but This and All is Mended” (*MND* 5.1.414):

To reassert the personal connection this thesis has to me as both a person and an actor, there will always be a need for me to locate characters that have the potential to be understood through the temporality of queerness. As a nonbinary person, it is the chance to enact a character in the various ways I see fit in connection to my own daily gender performance and an attempt to create as authentic a character as possible. Through what I have unpacked in this thesis, the potential to lean into the gender-ambiguous undertones in the performance of Ariel from *The Tempest*, Puck from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Snap/Alathe from *The Night Walker* are both textually and historically well-founded. Furthermore, gesturing to the “Kemp of it all,” the temporality cannot and should not be limited to just the magical, mischievous, and/or child-like characters in Shakespeare and beyond because of the continuance of the social and theatrical hierarchy that supports the masculine over the unmasculine. This is not to say that nonbinary or GNC actors should not have the option to portray these characters; it is to encourage theatre companies and spaces to continually advocate for diversity and inclusion in their casting practices and rehearsal spaces.

The potential for the performance of these characters within the temporality of queerness I have brought into conversation with gender as an act of performance and the understanding of gender performatives and how they exist with or against masculinity. Similarly, the representation of these characters as visible figures resonates with the early modern understanding of androgyny (and how that relates to divine human wholeness) and hermaphroditism (the tangible, physical combination of the sexes in one body), as well as the different axes of identity and performativity (X = sex; Y = gender; Z = interstice). This connection relates to the function of these characters as their androgynized status is performed

alongside a version of the heteronormative union of marriage (which is understood as another variation of “true” androgyny) and how they can use their proximity to and curiosity with humankindness to cement their androgynous potential. To continue, the literary domestication of the fairy and the queerness of early modern childhood is in conversation with one another as fairies are continually characterized by their childish mischief; as well as a representation of the separation between the feminine sphere of the home and the masculine sphere of the workforce and education.

From there, we move to the connection the function these characters share with the homoerotic tendencies of the master and apprentice relationship and how the unmasculine characters of the period (women and potentially gender ambiguous characters) were infantilized by the performance of which being enacted by the boy apprentice actors of the theatre companies. Lastly, I have tied in how these characters utilize their infantilized status with the use of echo as imitation/mimicry/disguise to manipulate characters to serve their purposes; to confuse characters to mess with them specifically, and to remind characters of their past actions and the effect they had on the other characters in the play. From my analysis above, I have concluded that Ariel aligns more with divine androgyny, and their performance is that of the hermaphrodized androgyne. To continue, Puck aligns more with the gender-ambiguous and mischievous child, and their performance is that of the androgynized hermaphrodite by comparison. Lastly, Snap/Alathe, in their function in the play, enacts both a performance of divine and child-like androgyny. Furthermore, by the end of the play, they also become one of the active players in the heteronormative union of marriage, making their performance of androgyny one that engages in each conceptual representation of androgyny.

In this day and age, it is essential to continue conversations surrounding nonbinary and androgynous potential as the LGBTQ+ community is undergoing the attempt of social erasure at the hands of conservative lawmakers. As this thesis has shown, the temporality of queerness allows for characters with potentially queer origins to come into focus in conversations surrounding contemporary theatrical practices. It supports that conversations surrounding gender identity and the differentiation between sex and gender have existed long before and after Shakespeare. The evidence I have provided for the androgynous potential of my case study characters reflects the ever-present need for the theatrical space to engage in exploration and play to discover opportunities for gender performatives to interact in new ways. Lastly, to call for consistently including androgyny and gender nonconformity in theatrical spaces in casting practices and rehearsal spaces.

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