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THE CHILD'S TWO BODIES: SHAKESPEARE, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE END OF SUCCESSION

BY JOSEPH CAMPANA

The king is dead. Long live the child?

In a dramatic canon full of the ghosts of dead fathers, William Shakespeare offers up tragic protagonists haunted by children. Desperate for assurances about his precarious political future, the monarch-murdering usurper Macbeth seeks out a second encounter with the infamous witches who prophesied his unexpected assumption of sovereignty. Macbeth meets Hecate herself and experiences visions of a crowned child, an armed head, a bloody babe, and a glorious future line of Scottish kings culminating in King James VI and I of Scotland and England.¹ Pivotal to *Macbeth* is the question of what central characters do, or do not, see: gruesome witches, killing instruments, guilt-stained hands, ambulatory trees, and prophetic visions. In act 2, scene 1, Macbeth imagines or witnesses the weapon he will later use to slay King Duncan. "Is this a dagger which I see before me," he famously asks, "The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. / I have thee not, and yet I see thee still" (2.1.1–3). Macbeth's mysterious dagger, Lady Macbeth's blood-soaked hands, Hecate's visions of a bloody babe, a crowned child, an armed head, and a line of seven kings: the famous images that flicker in and out of sight in Shakespeare's Scottish tragedy I will describe as apparitions not of a state of mind but of the state itself. All are apparitions of sovereignty. But the most potent, the most under-appreciated apparitions of sovereignty in *Macbeth* are not the phantom monarchs suggestive of the Stuart lineage or the armed head, the latter indicative of what Thomas Hobbes would call sovereignty by conquest. The bloody babe and the crowned child are apparitions of the more fraught phenomenon, sovereignty by generation, and it is the problematic mechanism by which sovereign perpetuity is produced that these figures address.

Shakespeare's works feature other incantatory visions of sovereignty. Macbeth's hallucinatory cascade joins the moments in *Richard II* of John of Gaunt's prophetic vision of the ruination of the glorious "sceptred isle" and the Duchess of Gloucester's invocation of the seven "vials of blood" and seven "branches" of Edward III's progeny, as well

as Henry's oft-cited description of the frustrating majesty of the king's two bodies, "twin-born with greatness," in *Henry V*, and even the nefarious Queen of *Cymbeline*'s stirring depiction of England's unassailable rocky shores resistant to Roman incursion.² Such speeches locate sovereignty in the glorified body of the monarch, in hereditary lines, or in the physical territory of a nation. Moreover, sovereignty seems governed, as Denis Baranger argues, by "apparition and recognition."³ Sovereignty, Baranger continues, is "made visible through certain signs, or marks. These marks were intended to trigger a process of recognition in which moral agents were induced to accept the evident, or maybe 'self-evident' existence of the sovereign."⁴

Given a veritable host of Shakespearean ghosts, it is no wonder scholars have begun to consider the apparitional nature of sovereignty.⁵ In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida considers the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father, who embodies the coincidence of the *revenant* and the *arrivant*—that is to say, the dead past that lives spectrally on and the call of a radical futurity yet to come. As Derrida puts it, the ghost suggests "an alterity that cannot be anticipated," one "that cannot be awaited *as such*, or recognized in advance therefore."⁶ Derrida construes the future as an uncanny iteration of an unfinished past lingering in a haunted present. How different *Specters of Marx* might have been had Derrida lavished his attention upon *Macbeth*, where the primary apparitions of sovereignty and futurity alike are child figures.

This sometimes crowned and sometimes bleeding figure of the child doubles, toils, and troubles in unexpected ways in the works of Shakespeare. If children are more than mere emblems of triumphant succession—the future that will have been—what other roles might they serve in the histories and tragedies of sovereignty Shakespeare shaped? What might we learn if we take up Lee Edelman's charge in *No Future* to consider the history of how political futurity becomes tangled up in the figure of the child?⁷ As scholars have approached with renewed vigor the parameters of sovereignty in early modern England, the figure of the monarch central to Ernst Kantorowicz and so vital to subsequent historians and literary critics, seems to recede.⁸ Before abandoning the figure of the king's two bodies identified by Kantorowicz, in favor of non-monarchical institutions of power, we might turn to some unfinished business in the study of early modern sovereignty, that elusive quality which Jean Bodin defines as "the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth."⁹

My argument here is that we have not attended to a unit of political figuration, one in which Shakespeare was particularly invested and that

possesses significant explanatory force with respect to early modern sovereignty. In *Sovereign Amicitie*, Laurie Shannon describes a powerful “micropolity” constituted by the monarch and the friend.¹⁰ The unit, or micropolity, to which I turn is that of the monarch and the child, or, at times, the monarch *as* child. Exploring the way power constellates around children provides insight into how the nature of sovereignty and the nature of the child were gradually and mutually transformed. Shakespeare’s frequent recourse to the child figures in his poems and plays has been recognized, especially of late, yet a focus on sovereignty is missing from an expanding scholarly literature on the early modern child.¹¹ Like the monarch of medieval political theology, Shakespeare’s children, I suggest, have two bodies: one personal and one political. Readers of Shakespeare have often attended to the vulnerable personal bodies of children in his works. But it is to the political bodies of children that sovereign efficacy gradually comes to be transferred.

There were myriad ways in which this micropolity of child and monarch appeared in the works of Shakespeare.¹² The urgencies of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs lent unique habitations and names to an evolving dilemma over the distribution of civic power and glory, a dilemma to which Shakespeare’s works were attuned. Indeed, three of the qualities Bodin associates with such power—absolute, indivisible, and perpetual—encounter significant challenges when sovereignty is located in the person of the monarch, even as that person is imagined to have two bodies. Henry VIII’s triumphant rearticulation of fantasies of absolutism, however in tension with the realities of political power, definitively shaped the sovereign imaginary of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs. Yet Henry VIII’s complexly shifting allegiances and, more pointedly, his multiple wives, divorces, and children pose a challenge to the “indivisibility” of sovereignty, not to mention the clarity of succession, which guaranteed the perpetuity of sovereignty.¹³

What follows is a discussion of how the body political of Shakespeare’s child figures focuses attention on succession and perpetuity. The deleterious effect of the child on sovereign perpetuity becomes clearer in *Richard II* and *Henry VI*. Finally, I focus on sovereign perpetuity in *Macbeth*, which I argue refracts the succession controversies that afflicted the transfer of rule from Queen Elizabeth to James that, according to Marie Axton, reawakened the theology of the king’s two bodies.¹⁴ Elizabeth, the barren queen, and James, the cradle king, made even more obvious how the child’s political body threatens to displace the king’s, resulting in an attention to children both protective and murderous. Shakespeare’s works comprehend political succession

as a subset of sovereignty's dominion over time. What troubles that dominion is the child who fails to ensure the self-evidence of sovereignty by generation. It is then a short step to *Macbeth's* vision of the end of succession as the annihilation of the "seeds of time" and time itself (1.3.56).

Edmond Malone claimed that *Macbeth* was written for a royal audience of King James and King Christian of Denmark and performed at Hampton Court on 7 August 1606. While some have found irresistible Malone's evocative scene, Nicholas Brooke rather convincingly debunks that scene as a myth.¹⁵ Yet we might understand this fantasy as simply one more apparition of the sovereign—twinned rulers spectating the works of Shakespeare, the great playwright of kingship. It is interesting to consider what King James or King Christian might have thought of the apparitions of sovereignty invoked by *Macbeth*, but no doubt the twinned bodies foremost in many viewers' minds in those years were neither the concept of the king's two bodies nor the spectacle of two kings sitting at a play. Rather, the twinned nations England and Scotland would have been of great concern. A few years earlier, on 19 March 1604, eager to formalize the union of England and Scotland, a union he imagined was "made in [his] blood" and that had already, in fact, occurred by virtue of his accession, James addressed this subject in a speech to Parliament.¹⁶ There he described himself not only as the union of those two countries but as the child of the union of two bloodlines: "by my descent lineally out of the loynes of *Henry* the seuenth, is reunited and confirmed in mee the Vnion of the two Princely Roses of the two Houses of LANCASTER and YORKE, whereof that king of happy memorie was the first Vniter, as he was also the first ground-layer of the other Peace."¹⁷

The War of the Roses provided Shakespeare's England with a powerful object lesson in the devastation wrought by the violation of legal succession and a rich landscape of historical material and political metaphor for considering the contemporary state of English sovereignty. James was keen to marshal this powerful precedent to his advantage in the brave new world of Stuart sovereignty, emphasizing the uneventful nature of his accession by citing Henry VII as a precedent. James would continue that prince's peace-making by bringing peace to larger bodies, two often quarreling neighbor nations. Indeed, "the Vnion of these two princely Houses, is nothing comparable to

the Vnion of two ancient and famous Kingdomes, which is the other inward peace annexed to my Person.”¹⁸

Like so many before him, James reached into the storehouses of memory to take advantage of the lessons of the War of the Roses and to deploy a series of venerable metaphors: “I am the Husband, and all the whole Isle is my lawfull Wife; I am the Head and it is my Body.”¹⁹ James preferred the paternal metaphors of monarchical absolutism, representing the king as God, father, and *communis parens* of his people. As he had argued in *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, “By the Law of Nature the King becomes a naturall Father to all his Lieges at his Coronation: And as the Father of his fatherly duty is bound to care for the nourishing, education, and vertuous gouernment of his children; euen so is the king bound to care for all his subjects.”²⁰ Even more potently, power *was* propagation in the address of King James to his first parliament in 1604:

Order, the Lustre of Nature, guided by a First Essence, put all Government into Form: First, in Two, who, by Procreation, according to the Rule of Power (increase and multiply) made a Family, with One Head; by Propagation, a Tribe, or Kindred, with One Elder, or Chief; by Multiplication, a Society, a Province, a Country, a Kingdom, with One or more Guides or Leaders, of Spirit, aptest, or, of Choice, fittest, to govern.²¹

If sovereignty was, in Jean Bodin’s influential definition, “the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth” over its citizens and subjects, James was keen to locate that authority securely with the sovereign himself by deploying figures consonant with the divine and absolute powers of a father king.²² Given the many ways in which monarchical power was in fact limited in Shakespeare’s England, it makes sense James would find appealing and useful such political metaphors as he attempted to bring about the peaceful union of his two nations by virtue of the efficacy of his royal body and its power to propagate.²³ Union turned out to be a halting process in the early years of his reign, one that challenged his potency and the theory of sovereignty on which his power was propped. “When I first propounded the Vnion,” James admitted in a speech on 31 March 1607, “I then thought there could haue bene no more question of it, then of your declaration and acknowledgement of my right vnto this Crowne, and that as two Twinnes, they would haue growne vp together.”²⁴ Frustrated by resistance to his plan for the union of the two kingdoms, James reasserts his aim: “I desire a perfect Vnion of Lawes and persons, and such a Naturalizing as may

make one body of both Kingdomes vnder mee your King. That I and my posteritie (if it so please God) may rule ouer you to the worlds ende.”²⁵ What becomes clear in these various passages is a simple fact. The vaunted problem of union that marked the early years of this new monarch’s reign was, in fact, a problem of succession. It is not that his claim to the throne was questioned, as some feared might be the case in the uncertain final years of Elizabeth’s reign. Rather, James’s vision of a unified England and Scotland depended as much on a series of unstable political metaphors (paternity and posterity) as on constantly shifting political realities, against whose rocky cliffs the Stuart dream of sovereignty often ran aground.

Unity depended on the efficacy of the king’s body to provide paternity, succession (not to mention posterity), and the mystical union of previously separate—if historically and politically intertwined—sovereign nations. “Was that body sufficient?” was the question at the heart of both union and succession controversies. As Marie Axton argues, James’s case for union both reopened wounds from the succession controversy of Elizabeth’s late reign and deployed “metaphors [that] spring from the old and fertile notion of the king’s two bodies.”²⁶ That notion, or “mystic fiction” as Kantorowicz describes it in his classic account, dictated “that the king is immortal because legally he can never die, or that he is legally never under age” and, more potently, that the mystical body of the king endowed him with a “superhuman ‘absolute perfection.’”²⁷ And though Kantorowicz points out the extent to which this notion was a legal fiction, it was a potent one nonetheless even if, as Axton points out, it embodies a constantly shifting and quite “precarious balance of power between the king and the state.”²⁸ As David Norbrook maintains, “[w]hen James did succeed to the English throne, the ‘two bodies’ theory acquired prominence for a time. . . . The union of crowns had brought two states together under one man, and James was anxious to insist that both English and Scottish subjects owed their allegiance to him in person rather than to their respective nations in the abstract.”²⁹ Albert Rolls also argues that James, unlike others who deployed the theory of the king’s two bodies, “was convinced that his two bodies endowed him with absolute power.”³⁰

For all the potency of the political metaphor of the king’s paternal body, at the very moment James invoked Henry VII to bolster his claim as the legitimate occupant of the throne and as the bringer of the peace of union to the nations of Scotland and England, he also unwittingly activated histories of sovereignty bound to undermine the very political metaphors he deployed. The union James desired

was still a century away. And what has not been clear enough is the identity of a particular ghost in the machine of sovereignty in the age of Shakespeare. To Kantorowicz's account of the king's two bodies (and Axton's supplementary account of the queen's two bodies) we might add an account of the child's two bodies. That is to say, not only does the royal child, like the king, have a second body, a body politic, but the figure of the child comes to be increasingly implicated in the changing image of sovereignty. This idea is indeed already embedded in perhaps the most cited passage deploying the theory of the king's two bodies, drawn from Edmund Plowden's legal commentaries. The qualities of the undying, divine king are explicated in order to prove insignificant the wedding of a child's body with the king's divine body. The critical case involved Queen Elizabeth's rights over the duchy of Lancaster and pivoted not only on whether a king might make an agreement in either his natural or divine body but also on whether or not Edward VI was able to make legal agreements while still in the years of his minority. The decision went in favor of the divine body of Edward VI, for

no act which the King does as King, shall be defeated by his Nonage. For the King has in him two Bodies, *viz.*, a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident, to the Imbecility of Infancy or old Age, and to the like Defects that happen to the natural Bodies of other People. But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.³¹

Elizabeth may have lost this ruling, but her case adumbrates a serious challenge to the king's two bodies, one predicated on the problem of a child sovereign.³²

What, after all, if the mortal body of the sovereign, which knew both age and infancy, *could* have a deleterious effect on the political body of the sovereign? What if the child no longer sustained the image of glorious futurity needed to reinforce the idea of monarchical succession as the face of sovereign perpetuity? By the time James was immersed in his struggle to unite England and Scotland, accumulated histories of troublesome children and troubled successions (including that of

James himself) had begun to jam the gears of the machine of monarchical sovereignty, which would grind to a halt with the execution of Charles I. What follows here is an attempt to identify, with reference to Shakespearean drama, a particular nexus of the deformation of monarchical sovereignty and the shifting political values associated with children.

Haunted by the bloody babe and the crowned child, *Macbeth's* laboratory of sovereignty reactivates those royal (and stage) histories in which children pose a particular problem for the notion of succession, including *Richard II* and *Henry VI*, whose titular characters founder in the wake of their royal minorities. This point seems especially ironic given that *Richard II* has traditionally been tangled up in the Essex rebellion, eliciting Queen Elizabeth's famous quip to William Lambarde, "I am Richard II, know ye not that?"³³ The deposed Richard was as much a proleptic portrait of James, the monarch marred by his own minority, crippled as a ruler because he was, in his own words, a "Cradle King."³⁴ If propagation is potency, as James believed it was, what potency was there in a mere cradle king?

In *The King's Two Bodies*, Kantorowicz argues that "the legal concept of the King's Two Bodies cannot, for other reasons, be separated from Shakespeare. For if that curious image, which from modern constitutional thought has seemed to vanish all but completely, still has a very real and human meaning today, this is largely due to Shakespeare. It is he who has eternalized that metaphor."³⁵ The metaphor is, for Kantorowicz, explicitly associated with tragedy, most particularly with *Richard II*, which he conceives of as the quintessential expression of "the humanly tragic aspect of royal 'geminat[ion].'"³⁶ But his chapter on *Richard II* begins with a speech from *Henry V*, delivered by Henry, a notable beneficiary of Richard's deposition: "We must bear all. O hard condition / Twin-born with greatness."³⁷ Henry, of course, bears another burden at this dark moment in the battle he wages to secure dominion over France. Not only do the king's two bodies weigh heavily upon him; so too does the open secret of his reign, the deposition of Richard II. As Kantorowicz reminds us, he famously prays for victory, asking, "O not today, think not upon the fault / My father made in compassing the crown" while detailing the acts of contrition (past and future) he engages in on behalf of his father's acts.³⁸ Although he has "interred anew" Richard's body and "on it have bestowed more contrite tears," the taint of deposition lingers.³⁹

But another fact governed the reception of *Richard II*, one perhaps obscured by the tragic humanity Kantorowicz finds in Shakespeare's

portrait of a king torn between mortal body and body politic. Although *Richard II* refers to Richard's many uncles, it does not remind its readers of the circumstances of his accession, retold by, among others, Samuel Daniel in *The Civile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke*. After the death of Richard's father, the Black Prince Edward of Woodstock, and his grandfather, Edward III,

the scepter in this glorious state
Supported with strong powre & victorie
Was left unto a Child ordain'd by fate
To stay the course of what might grow too hie:
Here was a stop that greatness did abate
When powre upon so weake a base did lie.⁴⁰

Richard, crowned at the tender age of ten, is marked by boyishness in the famous Westminster portrait, which dates from the late 1390s and is the earliest known portrait of an English monarch. In the portrait, a roughly thirty-year-old Richard stares out with the face of a child. Similarly, the contemporary Wilton Diptych presents the image of a youth, backed by John the Baptist, Edward the Confessor, and Edmund the Martyr, who kneels in prayer before the right panel, which features a host of angels surrounding the Virgin Mary, who holds forth the Christ child. If sovereignty was always, as Jens Bartelson describes the tradition so amply explored by Kantorowicz “a *christomimetic paradigm of rulership*,” then there is something quite canny about this doubling here: the boyish Richard and the divine child.⁴¹ Although Henry IV and Henry V might seem to admirably supplant this weak king, the triumph of Henry V's victories in France would not last. *Henry V* ends with the anticipation of failure of English sovereignty as the failure of succession:

Henry the Sixth, in infant bands crowned King
Of France and England, did this king succeed,
Whose state so many had the managing,
That they lost France and made his England bleed.⁴²

Shakespeare was of course not the first to note the deleterious effects of Henry VI's minority. Indeed, *The Falles of Unfortunate Princes* portrays a Henry VI who is painfully aware of the problem of his own minority and who bemoans his own birth.⁴³ Henry VI's complaint was included in the earliest, that is to say 1559, edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. Thus within the tradition of exemplary literature for rulers, Henry speaks not only from beyond the veil of death but as if



Figure 1. *The Westminster Portrait of Richard II*, by permission of Dean and Chapter of Westminster.



Figure 2. *Wilton Diptych* (National Gallery, London).

he should never have been born, which suggests an evolution from the celebration of the glorious child-king Henry VI to the expression of increasing anxieties about child sovereigns. Skepticism about the damaging coincidence of child and sovereign in Henry VI's minorities structures the first *Henriad*. Before Henry's capture in *2 Henry VI*, and in a contradiction of *1 Henry VI*, in which he is crowned as a youth, Henry claims,

No sooner was I crept out of my cradle
But I was made a king, at nine months old.
Was never subject long'd to be a king
As I do long and wish to be a subject.⁴⁴

Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry VI* are read as immature characters. William Rossky has argued that the key to *Richard II* is the implied immaturity of that titular sovereign.⁴⁵ In some sense, then, *Richard II* and *Henry VI* provide potent forebears for James I when he complains of the burden that his own childhood, his minority rule, and his cradle kingship left him.

But the problem is neither characterological nor biographical; that is to say, the loss of sovereign power due to the immaturity or abnormal

development of particular former boy kings is not the critical issue for sovereignty in these plays. To make the issue one of character or of affective family relations is to defend against the failure of lineal succession itself, which is at issue when Henry VI agrees that he “unnaturally shall disinherit” his own son, assigning the crown to the York line of succession in order to end the civil war.⁴⁶ Clifford berates Henry for this decision, ignoring Henry IV’s usurpation of the throne and thus reinstalling a fiction of the naturalness of succession.

Nothing more powerfully demonstrates the failure of succession than two mirroring incidents Henry witnesses on the battlefield. In a play known for spectacular scenes—the murder of Rutland, the bloody napkin and the paper crown offered to Plantagenet, the murder of Plantagenet—two less noted deaths are of great import. Henry will read these occurrences as a sign of the “viperous worm” of “civil dissension . . . / That gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth.”⁴⁷ But what we witness is the annihilation of the capacity to construct stable timelines of descent that govern the distribution of power through natural succession. In the midst of the battle, a son enters the stage dragging a corpse that, as he rifles through its possessions for plunder, he discovers to be his father:

Who’s this? O God! It is my father’s face
Whom in this conflict I, unwares, have killed.
.....
And I, who at his hands received my life,
Have by my hands of life bereaved him.⁴⁸

Shakespeare completes the image with chilling symmetry as a father then enters the stage dragging a body he will discover to be his son:

Ah, no, no, no—it is mine only son!
Ah, boy, if any life be left in thee,
Throw up thine eye!
.....
What stratagems, how fell, how butcherly,
Erroneous, mutinous, and unnatural,
This deadly quarrel daily doth beget!
O boy, thy father gave thee life too soon,
And hath bereft thee of thy life too late!⁴⁹

Henry offers to weep with these men for their losses, but the problem is far greater than that of civil war. Succession itself has been snuffed out. The process of begetting and sustaining life to preserve lines of descent falters. The son has destroyed his source and origin and

bemoans living on in the wake of that destruction while the father, in offering to make his body a grave (“These arms of mine shall be thy winding sheet; / My heart, sweet boy, shall be thy sepulchre”), completes the image, for in destroying his posterity he has transformed his own body from a source of life into an empty tomb.⁵⁰

Although succession seems in perpetual crisis in this tetralogy, the idea of a history play without some (even token) nod to the value of aristocratic lineage might have been unthinkable. Thus, images of the slaughtered child and of annihilated succession come to be replaced by an image of glorious future prosperity. That image, too, is a child, and in this moment Shakespeare identifies a potent political mechanism, the replacement of the inadequate child of succession with the politically unimpeachable child of future glory. Henry VI encounters Henry of Richmond and confirms the prophecy recounted in Polydore Vergil about Henry’s rise:

Come hither, England’s hope.

King Henry lays his hand on Richmond’s head

If secret powers

Suggest but truth to my divining thoughts,
This pretty lad will prove our country’s bliss.
His looks are full of peaceful majesty,
His head by nature framed to wear a crown,
His hand to wield a sceptre, and himself
Likely in time to bless a regal throne.
Make much of him, my lords, for this is he
Must help you more than you are hurt by me.⁵¹

Destruction and repair come at the hands of children. The bloody babe (Henry VI) and the crowned child (Henry VII) meet in this brief instant. While Henry VII may have represented some fantasy solution to failed (or false) monarchs, civil dissension, and bloody war, monarchy faced a greater problem. The king’s body politic was always undermined by his mortal body, and in this, the case of the child’s body was exemplary. Moreover, the possibility of sustaining a lineage was increasingly untenable. How could King James’s campaign for union, predicated on the body politic of the king but undermined by the body politic of the child, succeed when the idea of succession was under siege and the capacity to construct timelines stretching from the noble past to the glorious future was less and less possible? The problem, *Macbeth* reveals, was that the time of succession had passed, and neither child nor sovereign could sustain it.

Sovereignty depends on both time and its denial. Succession anchors sovereignty by ensuring perpetuity through the management of mortality. That is to say, even though the fantasy of succession is uninterrupted sovereignty, there is no succession without death. In this, the perpetuity Bodin insists on as a sovereign quality offers up a paradox Bartelson explores in *The Genealogy of Sovereignty*, where he argues that modern notions of sovereignty and the state depend on an “ethical transvaluation of time.”⁵² As a result of the “gradual reception of Aristotelian texts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, time underwent profound change, as did the notion of change.” On the one hand this enabled the separation of the body politic from the body of the ruler. “The symbols, concepts, and insignia of rulership and authority,” Bartelson argues, “could be depersonalized, deprived of momentary liturgical backing, and instead vested with sempiternal existence. The realm of body politic thus stood above the corrosive influence of transitory time.”⁵³ On the other hand, “time becomes accessible to measurement,” and its measurement becomes critical to the perpetuity of the realm. “If the state never dies,” Bartelson argues, “one can tie the currents of its inner life to a calendar based on the recurrent pattern of movement displayed by heavenly bodies . . . [t]o the irreversible succession of natural events such as births and death correspond the dynastic successions within a continuous state.”⁵⁴ Time spatialized by and rooted in measure exists in tension with the bodies, royal and otherwise, who must bear in flesh the paradox that makes sovereignty and the state possible. It is this painful tension to which *Macbeth* turns its considerable energies.

Macbeth contains not only extensive references to the word “time” (more than any other Shakespearean play) but also an uncanny (and uncannily related) series of children who have been an odd if important part of *Macbeth*’s critical history and serve, we might say, as timepieces capable of recording, often to their own detriment, political transformations of extraordinary import with respect to notions of sovereignty.⁵⁵ Moments of suggestive futurity and of temporal seizure in *Macbeth* help us understand the way strategies for organizing time coincide with strategies for managing children and, consequently, also understand that the stopping of time and the destroying of clocks might be analogous to the killing of children in *Macbeth*. Being the Scottish tragedy performed in the wake of James’s accession, *Macbeth* has always been assumed to be about James, either because it confirms his lineage, treats his near assassination, considers his vision of kingship, or conveys something

about the politics of his attempt to unify England and Scotland.⁵⁶ More aptly, we might understand the political import of the play by its capacity to explore the changing nature of both the child's body politic and the idea of succession that sustains (or fails to sustain) sovereignty as monarchical rule based on lineage and succession.

In *Time and the Other*, Emmanuel Levinas identifies temporality not through an Aristotelian tradition that imagines time as spatial, characterized by linearity, but as a fundamentally ethical encounter with a radical and ungraspable futurity constituting utter alterity. As Levinas puts it, "Anticipation of the future and projection of the future, sanctioned as essential to time by all the theories from Bergson to Sartre, are but the present of the future and not the authentic future; the future is what is not grasped, what befalls us and lays hold of us."⁵⁷ The ghost may be Derrida's figure of the past, but the child figures the mysterious alterity and fecundity of futurity for Levinas. The emphasis on ghosts in Shakespeare studies might serve a larger objective of disarming the disturbing entanglement of overwhelming affect, precocious sexuality, and nonlinear temporalities evoked by the child.⁵⁸ As a consequence, children in Shakespeare's plays (and in Shakespeare criticism) suffer from eradication, minimization, sentimentalization, or spectralization. These latter strategies are especially important in *Macbeth*, in which sentimentality (the concern for tender and weak children whose humanity is extinguished by the inhumanity of murderous ambition) is one way of spectralizing child figures.

The most fundamental spectralization of the figure of the child occurs in the very construction of the play. As we might recall from one of Shakespeare's sources, Raphael Holinshed, finds Macbeth the benevolent supplanter of a weak, young king whose heirs were themselves young children used as both political symbols and political pawns.⁵⁹ The transformation of Duncan into the stately figure of paternal sovereignty (not unlike the ghost of Hamlet) suggests that the temporality associated with paternal sovereignty is the real target of *Macbeth's* murderous impulses (just as the real problem of the historical record seems to be yet another cradle king). The promptness of Shakespeare's Duncan is one index of such sovereign time. Before discovering the dead king's body, Macduff remarks of waking the king, "He did command me to call timely on him. / I have almost slipped the hour" (2.3.45–46).

Formative debates on the very notion of Shakespearean criticism invoke not only *Macbeth* but the importance of children in that play. Cleanth Brooks's seminal "The Naked Babe and the Cloak of

Manliness” famously counters L. C. Knights’s “How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth” on the very matter of the significance of children, which anchors Knights’s dismissive account of Shakespeare critics all too keen to speculate beyond the boundaries of the text.⁶⁰ Brooks examines instead the limits of metaphor, seeing children as ideal test cases and not only representations of the future but also representations of the soft, vulnerable humanity opposed to murderous masculinity in *Macbeth*. Though Brooks opens up new avenues of inquiry into the uses of metaphor in Shakespeare, he also enshrines a sentimental notion of childhood that was to become a lasting part of Shakespeare studies. Critics still tend to find in Shakespeare’s children exactly those qualities predictably associated with childhood: innocence, purity, helplessness, speechlessness, and unambiguously glorious future promise.⁶¹ Even Carol Rutter’s sophisticated work on children in Shakespeare posits that *Macbeth* wages a war against children who represent specific and anticipated bloodlines and futures. Thus, “to stop the future,” she argues, “Macbeth must stop the children—by slaughtering them.”⁶² If we consent to the identification of children with the future projected by the laws of paternal sovereignty or as the markers of particular linear timelines, Rutter is right. But then we lose the radical (even queasy) futurity children connote in Shakespeare’s plays. In *Macbeth*, the war is not against the child as the projected future or future anterior—that which will have already been—but rather against the constricting linear temporality associated with paternity and sovereignty.

The sentimental notion of the child works in tandem with qualities associated with time from Aristotle to the early modern period: quantification and linear spatialization. As Levinas puts it:

On the one hand there is common sense time—which essentially remains that of science—the measurable time of our watches, Aristotle’s time understood as the numbering of movement, that is, time which is accessible starting from its spatial expression and measurement by chronometers, whether they be watches or clepsydras, a time homogenous like space, made up of invariable instants which repeat themselves.⁶³

Such a spatially oriented notion is, of course, an inheritance of Aristotle reinforced by developing technologies of time.⁶⁴ For all that *Macbeth* invokes witches and ghosts, weird temporalities and weird sisters, its various forms of prophecy are perfectly compatible with the breaking of time into discrete linear paths. Just after the appearance of the

witches and prior to the articulation of future advancement for both Macbeth and Banquo, the latter famously asks these uncanny spirits:

If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not,
Speak then to me[.]

(1.3.56–58)

For all the unpredictable mutation organic growth might imply, here Banquo requests a linear reading of unfolding time. If all life were organized into moments, each of which might grow into timelines, prophecy would constitute knowing what parts of the past or present would come to fruition. The future, then, would be the predictable consequence of past or present circumstance. Linear time threatens to render the future the future anterior (“what will have been”), the projective past, or what Levinas calls “the present of the future.”⁶⁵ If these seeds of time are, on the one hand, moments of time, they are also suggestively signifiers of generation or procreation, for children, too, are seeds of time simultaneously forced to labor as extensions of past lineage and as bearers of the weight of future promise. Macbeth announces Duncan’s death to his children, marking the “instant” of the death as the end of “blessèd time” (2.3.91) when “The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood / Is stopped, the very source of it is stopped” (2.3.98–99). The figure of the fountain, of blood as source, is the correlative of children that extend the parent in time, depending upon its authorizing source for progress into futurity.

The violation of paternal sovereignty comes to be closely associated with the violation of the innocent and pure child of glorious future promise. Macbeth imagines that child as a personification of the response to the extinguishing of the just Duncan:

And pity, like a naked new-born babe
Striding the blast, or heaven’s cherubin, horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
That tears shall drown the wind.

(1.7.21–25)

The child is at once the vulnerable seed of time that deserves pity and care and a figure of retributive outrage responding to the violation of its origin. It is the role of the child, as in the figure of the river and its source, to register the image of the father or, indeed, to register

outrage at the loss of the paternal image. Moreover, the child (as a figure reflecting the paternal past in its manifestation of future glory) appears as the violated object of Lady Macbeth's fantasy. Complaining of Macbeth's weakening resolve, she refers to the manly act of murdering Duncan as one that organizes anew their surrounding temporality:

Nor time nor place
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

(1.7.51–59)

Lady Macbeth's infamous indifference to maternal care marks the play's articulation of the horror associated with anything that violates the priority accorded the future-oriented child. Indeed, the invocations of murderous maternity and infanticide so popular with critics are merely the underpinnings of a sentimental notion of childhood that works in the service of a very predictable temporal agenda. Yet in spite of the violation of temporal narratives implied in killing one's own child (and so gruesomely), Lady Macbeth remains committed to Banquo's "seeds of time" theory of temporality; she merely endorses an alternate timeline, one featuring Macbeth and herself as the progenitors. That Lady Macbeth remains committed to the notion of time as descended from paternal sovereignty and leading to glorious childhood is perhaps most clear in her failure to murder Duncan herself. For all that she disdains maternal care, for all that she asks to be "unsexed" (1.5.40), and for all that, in Macbeth's eyes, she is made of "undaunted mettle [that] should compose / Nothing but males" (1.7.73–74), she admits, "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (2.2.12–13). Paternal resemblance, along with its temporal corollary, remains central to Lady Macbeth's project in the play.

Does Macbeth, however, endorse the creation of an alternative timeline with himself as the new paternal sovereign? At first, both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth seem to accede to this proposition. On the subject of the prophecy Macbeth declares,

Two truths are told
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.

(1.3.126–28)

Time is the sovereign extension of one's own vision of order, the capacity to sustain an imperial theme, with children as "prologues" to that theme. Lady Macbeth, unsurprisingly, deploys such language with regularity. After learning of the witches' prophecy, she admits to Macbeth,

Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

(1.5.55–57)

The idea of an "ignorant present" is one that exists on a determined, linear timeline. Neither knowledge nor ignorance of that timeline alters its fundamental contours. However, we begin to see here the hint of another relationship to time. To "feel now / The future in the instant" is to begin to understand time not as *chronos*, or numerable, linear time, but rather as *kairos*, translated somewhat weakly as the seizing of an opportune moment, or, more properly, as an instant separate from or singled out within sequential time as a special moment of propitious action. *Kairos* is perhaps what Lady Macbeth refers to earlier when she claims that Macbeth's initial promise of ambitious action "would make" both time and place here, assembling from the seizing of opportunity a new timeline. What we experience, here, in this reference to *kairos* is the contraction or cessation of sequential time. The future is not that which proceeds gloriously from paternal image to pure child but rather that which is seized or wrenched, as one timeline is broken to establish another.

More extreme, however, than the language of wrenched or broken time from which new timelines might be assembled is the extremity of Macbeth's commitment not to breaking one timeline to create another but rather to destroy linear prospectation and retrospection alike:

If th'assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success: that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all, here,
But here upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.

(1.7.2–7)

Macbeth seeks the execution of an act so forceful and daring that it would prevent response, which would be one measure of its success. There would be no present or future consequences for past action, and the past would be as if obliterated. But the language here, while rooted in pragmatic concerns, also suggests that in achieving “with his surcease success” and preempting future response Macbeth would strike a more fundamental blow against the linearity guaranteed by paternal order. To strike a blow that is “the be-all and the end-all” is to suggest the extinguishing not just of one life or even the life of a king but of all systems of temporality that arrange the discrete particulars of experience into sequence. To “jump the life to come” is as much an attempt to enter the life that is to come in the wake of Duncan’s murder as it is an attempt to leap past the idea of “a life to come,” a future extending forward from seeds of time.

Macbeth is, after all, more than aware that his own reign would not enter the same logic of generative paternity. After Duncan’s murder, Macbeth contemplates the idea that for all that he was prophesied to accede to the throne, Banquo “They hailed him father to a line of kings” (3.1.60–61). This renders Macbeth the bearer of a “fruitless crown” and wielder of a “barren sceptre”: “Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand, / No son of mine succeeding” (3.1.64–65). Resenting his own sovereign service to a futurity not his own, Macbeth commits himself not to “the seeds of Banquo kings” but rather to the resolve to destroy Banquo and all his heirs (3.1.71). Such a gesture is not merely one of self-preservation; rather, it seeks to destroy the unfolding futurity of paternity by which, ultimately, the sovereignty of a king extends into a dynasty. Macbeth resents but also disdains the unfolding of linear time. While Lady Macbeth becomes stricken by her own guilty remembrance (her inability to resist being defined by past action), her husband dwells on the futility of temporal sequence:

There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

(5.5.17–22)

Far better, it seems, not to be caught in the trap of linear time, which leads from a deadening succession of indistinguishable days to both “the last syllable of recorded time” and “dusty death,” which may as well be the same.

Yet again, the alternation between the desire to preserve linear narratives of time (a desire that persists even in the struggle between opposing timelines) and the desire to destroy time entirely appears not merely in the language of childhood but in the appearance of both “actual” and spectral children in *Macbeth*. As Macbeth endeavors to destroy all who oppose him and would therefore enable the restitution of Duncan’s line or the elaboration of Banquo’s line, he kills Macduff’s wife and children. Macduff’s abandonment of his family, his flight in the face of Macbeth’s menace, constitutes, for his wife, the destruction of familial generation. She says of her son, “Fathered he is, yet he’s fatherless” (4.2.27) while telling him, falsely, “Sirrah, your father’s dead” (4.2.30). For Macduff’s wife the crisis of paternity throws into question the status of the son, while the son points out that, in fact, not only does he not believe his father is dead but he is concerned that the status of his mother as wife might be called into question. Interestingly enough, as is often the case with Shakespeare’s children, the adult gesture of pitying or condescending to the child (“Poor prattler, how thou talkst!”) belies the child’s power to demystify the rhetoric of childhood sentimentality that accompanies temporal narratives (4.2.65).⁶⁶ For all that Macduff and his wife invest their affect in such narratives, Macduff is also, famously, “none of woman born” (4.1.95) and capable of defeating *Macbeth* because he was “from his mother’s womb / Untimely ripped” (5.10.15–16). As a figure of the “Untimely,” Macduff defies the pattern of birth that unfolds into sentimental, temporal narratives of childhood. At the same time, it is the untimely Macduff who sets the kingdom right, enabling the restoration of paternal sovereignty and the return of Duncan’s heir. Indeed, one of the oddities of the play is the fact that paternity remains so central in spite of the suggestion of elective monarchy early in the play.

Macbeth stages a confrontation between two wholly incompatible if sometimes coincident temporal orientations. On the one hand, a variety of linear temporality is anchored by mutually constitutive notions of sentimental childhood and sovereign paternity. This temporality fosters its own reproduction even as competing timelines (complete with competing heirs) vie for supremacy within the play. On the other hand, there is the attempt to annihilate linear narratives that depend on paternal sovereigns potentially victim to cradle kings and sentimentalized children. The sequential nature of successive days and paternal succession is both the target of Macbeth’s rage and the contrary of Macduff’s “Untimely” quality. In the midst of the witches’ sabbath, Macbeth encounters a vision not merely of his future end but of these

incompatible orientations. Before him appear two spectral children who speak in the language of prophecy. One is bloody:

Thunder. Second Apparition: a bloody Child.

SECOND APPARITION: Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth.

MACBETH: Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

SECOND APPARITION: Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

Apparition descends.

(4.1.93–97)

And one is crowned:

Thunder. Third Apparition: a child crowned, with a tree in his hand.

What is this

That rises like the issue of a king,

And wears upon his baby-brow the round

And top of sovereignty?

(4.1.102–5)

Macbeth cannot hear the bloody babe. He is indifferent to its sentimental appeal if not to its heralding of untimely mystery. As for the crowned child, there could be no better image of linear time anchored by the child and the paternal sovereign. The attempt to see past linear time is a direct consequence of Macbeth's indifference. Time may be measured and located as the heirs of Duncan take up their rightful places, but the demystification of succession that *Macbeth* performs renders any suggestion of a return to monarchical sovereignty a specter of false hope.

And what of Macbeth's nemesis Macduff, "from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped"? In the hands of Shakespeare, the riddle of Macbeth's downfall indexes a major shift in the political import of the child's body politic. To say that the child of the future is not born of woman is also to suggest that it is not born of a surrogate to a patrilineal temporal and sovereign order. *Henry VI* teaches us that the medieval fiction of the king's body politic was always undermined by the child's body. *Macbeth* imagines a world without succession, the temporal prop of monarchical sovereignty. The medieval political theology of the king's two bodies was fundamentally compromised by an inability to make cohere the moral and the divine bodies of sovereignty. The child's body was an exemplary instance of the source of this incoherence. And, indeed, accounts of early modernity by Mervyn James and Lawrence Stone suggest the decay of sovereignty as monarchy and aristocratic lineage

as the primary conduit for transmitting power.⁶⁷ Both King James in his accession and pursuit of union and Shakespeare in his study of succession in *Macbeth* invoked medieval histories and theologies of sovereignty to sustain political projects. But, as Shakespeare realized (and perhaps James did not), the time of sovereignty had already changed. The past was no longer prologue to a glorious future but rather the site of an undermined sovereign body. The future was no longer the glorious extension of monarchical lines of power and prestige. In his “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin identifies in moments of radical change a consequent revision of or violence to modes of time keeping. “The great revolution,” he claims, “introduces a new calendar.” As Benjamin notes of the French Revolution, “on the first evening of fighting it turned out that the clocks in towers were being fired on simultaneously and independently from several places in Paris.”⁶⁸ Benjamin perhaps had in mind Karl Marx’s citation of a similar gesture in the French Revolution’s most powerful precedent, the English Civil War. Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, remembers the moment that “Cromwell, when he dissolved the Long Parliament, went alone into the midst of the chamber, drew out his watch so that it should not carry on a minute past the limit he had fixed for it, and then drove out every single member with jovial banter and abuse.”⁶⁹

Children were central to the way time was kept in early modernity. Shakespeare’s child figures, we might say, are exemplary broken timepieces whose fractures reveal crises in the concept of sovereignty and innovations in thinking about the political bodies of children. As increasingly sovereignty was, in spite of the absolutist articulations of the Tudor and Stuart houses, shifting away from the monarchical body, it was not the figure of Cromwell driving it forth. Rather, it was the figure of the child. The clock that was stopped at Charles I’s execution to mark the emergence of a new order had, if only in a figurative sense, been stopped years before. Children past and future jammed the gears of succession. James surely knew that the too many wives and therefore children of Henry VIII provided as problematic a precedent for monarchical continuity as did the childlessness of Elizabeth. Moreover, his own tenure as a cradle king constantly undermined his fantasies of absolute rule. Looking back to Henry VII offered little hope of clarity, it turned out. Never mind the question of how he came to rule; the legitimacy of Henry VII was haunted by a series of children—the imposters Perkin Warbeck and Lambert Simmel (who claimed to be the lost heirs of Edward IV, the innocents murdered in

the tower by Richard III) and the actual descendant of Edward IV's brother George, Duke of Clarence, whose claim to the throne was as legitimate as his imprisonment was swift after Henry VII's victory.⁷⁰ The futurity imagined by James was curtailed by the failure of union and by the death of his son Henry. Indeed, for so many in England, a wholly alternative trajectory for the nation died with Henry and with the succession of Charles.⁷¹ The sons of James rose up in the shape of a crowned child and a bloody babe. But the sacred vials of blood had been spilt. The child of the future was no longer king.

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NOTES

¹ See William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, in *The Complete Works*, 2nd ed., ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), act 4, scene 1. Hereafter cited parenthetically by act, scene, and line number. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to works by Shakespeare use the Clarendon *Complete Works*.

² Shakespeare, *Richard II*, 2.1.40, 1.2.12; *Henry V*, 4.1.230–81. And see *Cymbeline*, 3.1.14–33.

³ Denis Baranger, "The Apparition of Sovereignty," in *Sovereignty in Fragments: The Past, Present, and Future of a Contested Concept*, eds. Hent Kalmo and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010), 49.

⁴ Baranger, 47.

⁵ In "Macbeth and the Ghosts of Sovereignty," Paul Kottman argues that Macbeth's encounter with the ghost at the banquet witnesses his isolation from others and a failure of hospitality suggestive of "the disappearance of a certain relationship between sovereignty and theatricality which Renaissance scholarship has wanted to see in Shakespeare and his contemporaries," ("Macbeth and the Ghosts of Sovereignty," *SEDERI: Journal of the Spanish Society for English Renaissance Studies* 12 [2001]: 283). Kottman's fascinating account sometimes conflates "sovereign" with "sovereignty," confuses the theatricality of power with the theatricality of sovereignty, and too insistently anticipates the coming of Thomas Hobbes.

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 65.

⁷ See Lee Edelman's influential notion of reproductive futurism, which locates the child as the "perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention" (*No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2004], 3). More recently, Edelman extends his argument about children and political futurity to address the survival of *Hamlet* and, more generally, the idea of "collective survival" by examining how "the Child has become the guarantor of futurity: a fantasy figure produced as the promise of secular temporal closure intended to restore an imaginary past in a future endlessly deferred" ("Against Survival: Queerness in a Time That's Out of Joint," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (2011): 148). While there is too little space here to engage fully with Edelman's substantial and now-influential theses, it is important to note that the relationship between children and futurity, or "the Child" and political futurity, might be radically different in Shakespeare's England than in Edelman's America, which makes Shakespeare's child

figures useful test cases for a political theology of the child. Moreover, one might ask if the relationship Edelman so cannily lays out between children and political futurity has not itself shifted even in the nearly ten years since the publication of *No Future*.

⁸ For instance, Julia Reinhard Lupton approaches “the strange hybridization of political and religious thinking in the Renaissance” with reference to “the corpus of citizens implied by political theology rather than its gallery of dead kings” (*Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2005], 5). Oliver Arnold explicitly turns from “the mystical trappings, symbolic displays, and lush rhetoric of sacred monarchy [that] have long captured the new historicist imagination” to “the new practices and theories of parliamentary representation that emerged during Elizabeth’s and James’s reigns” and that take center stage in Shakespeare’s histories and tragedies (Oliver Arnold, *The Third Citizen: Shakespeare’s Theater and the Early Modern House of Commons* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2007], 2, 4). This development represents an invigorating extension of sovereignty past the boundaries of the king’s body to include representations of parliament, cultures of law, anticipations of English republicanism, the institutions of bureaucratic government, and the shifting significance of territorial boundaries of land and sea.

⁹ Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty*, ed. Julian H. Franklin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 1.

¹⁰ Shannon, *Sovereign Amittie: Figures of Friendship* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2001), 17.

¹¹ On recent trends in the study of Shakespeare and the figure of the child see Campana, “Shakespeare’s Children,” *Literature Compass* 8.1 (2011): 1–14.

¹² Elsewhere I have argued that *King John* and *Richard III* consider the unit of child and sovereign with respect to the absolute nature of sovereignty. As the purportedly “innocent” child Arthur lives under threat of violence from his usurping uncle John, the child’s proximity to the sovereign acts as a solvent, dissolving and redistributing the agency of the monarch. Like many of Shakespeare’s histories, *King John* questions the idea that the monarch can sustain and wield sovereignty, but it is neither the *Magna Carta* of the historical King John’s era (noticeably absent from the play) nor the potency of papal authority or neighboring nations (both present in the play) that compromise John’s rule. Rather, the limitation of King John’s “absolute” agency and efficacy emerges localized in the figure of the child. See Campana, “Killing Shakespeare’s Children: The Cases of *Richard III* and *King John*,” *Shakespeare* 3.1 (2007): 18–39.

¹³ On the problem of the indivisibility of sovereignty see Jacques Lezra, “Phares, or Divisible Sovereignty,” *Religion and Literature* 38.4 (2006): 13–39, republished in his *Wild Materialism: The Ethic of Terror and the Modern Republic* (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011); and Bradin Cormack, “Shakespeare’s Other Sovereignty: On Particularity and Violence in *The Winter’s Tale* and *the Sonnets*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.4 (2011): 485–513.

¹⁴ See Marie Axton, *The Queen’s Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977).

¹⁵ See Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 71–72.

¹⁶ King James VI and I, *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 135.

¹⁷ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 134.

¹⁸ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 134–35.

¹⁹ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 136.

²⁰ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 65. It is perhaps no surprise that the paternal language of absolute power was invoked even more potently in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot. In a speech delivered on 9 November 1605 James remarked, “Kings are in the word of GOD it selfe called Gods, as being his Lieutenants and Vice-gerents on earth, and so adorned and furnished with some sparkles of Diuinitie” (147).

²¹ “House of Commons Journal Volume 1: 19 March 1604,” *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1: 1547–1629* (1802), 139–140, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=8419>.

²² Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from the Six Books of the Commonwealthe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), 1.

²³ For an account of the shift from patrimonial to bureaucratic governmental structures, see Thomas Ertman, *Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 156–223.

²⁴ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 160.

²⁵ James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 161.

²⁶ Axton, 133.

²⁷ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Univ. of Princeton Press, 1957), 4–5.

²⁸ Axton, x.

²⁹ David Norbrook, “The Emperor’s New Body? *Richard II*,” Ernst Kantorowicz, and the Politics of Shakespeare Criticism,” *Textual Practice* 10.2 (1996): 343.

³⁰ Albert Rolls, *Documents Illustrating the Theory of the King's Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 14. See also Rolls, *The Theory of the King's Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

³¹ Edmund Plowden, *Commentaries or Reports* (London, 1816), 2122; quoted in Kantorowicz, 7.

³² Many have challenged Kantorowicz’s account, disputing not necessarily the existence of the theory of the king’s two bodies but, rather, its prominence, relevance, and implications. Axton chides Kantorowicz’s failure to consider, in depth, the specifically Elizabethan manifestation of the king’s two bodies as well as the competing political paradigms. Norbrook finds that Kantorowicz unknowingly glorifies the absolutism of the theory while ignoring republican stirrings in early modern England. Similarly, Giorgio Agamben finds Kantorowicz’s account invested in the glorification of eternal kingship to the exclusion of considerations of the nature of the sovereign exception (that the king is above the law or, in James’s parlance, the king is “the speaking law” [James VI and I, *Political Writings*, 75]); see *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998], 91–103. This feature of kingship explicated by Bodin’s influential early modern account of sovereignty and in Carl Schmitt’s influential modern account of sovereignty; see Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006). Nonetheless, the medieval theory of the mystic body of the king helps us to understand the ways in which the child was a political metaphor endowed with a political body and, increasingly, associated with the body politic of the nation.

³³ British Museum Additional Manuscript 15,664, f.226, quoted in Chris Fitter, “Historicizing Shakespeare’s *Richard II*: Current Events, Dating, and the Sabotage of Essex,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.2 (2005): 1.

³⁴ James VI and I, *The Poems of James VI of Scotland*, 2 vol., ed. James Craigie (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1958), 2:188.

³⁵ Kantorowicz, 26. For an account of the uncanny persistence of the king's two bodies concept in contemporary politics see Eric L. Santner, *The People's Two Bodies: The People's Two Bodies Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2011).

³⁶ Kantorowicz, 24.

³⁷ Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.1.230–31.

³⁸ Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.1.290–91. See Kantorowicz, 24, 28.

³⁹ Shakespeare, *Henry V*, 4.1.292, 293.

⁴⁰ Samuel Daniel, *The Civile Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke*, (London, 1595), 1:26; cited in Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 8 vol. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 3:436.

⁴¹ Jens Bartelson, *The Genealogy of Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995), 92.

⁴² Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Epilogue, 9–12.

⁴³ *The fallles of unfortunat princes* (London: 1619), 375–76.

⁴⁴ Shakespeare, 2 *Henry VI*, 4.8.3–6. 3 *Henry VI* confirms Henry's position in the first scene: "When I was crowned, I was but nine months old" (1.1.112).

⁴⁵ William Rosky, "An Elizabethan Perspective on *Richard II*: The King as Child," *Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts* 15 (1987): 55–77.

⁴⁶ Shakespeare, 1 *Henry VI*, 1.1.194.

⁴⁷ Shakespeare, 1 *Henry VI*, 3.1.73–74.

⁴⁸ Shakespeare, 3 *Henry VI*, 2.5.61–62, 67–68.

⁴⁹ Shakespeare, 3 *Henry VI*, 2.5.83–85, 88–92.

⁵⁰ Shakespeare, 3 *Henry VI*, 2.5.114–15.

⁵¹ Shakespeare, 3 *Henry VI*, 4.7.68–76.

⁵² Bartelson, 97.

⁵³ Bartelson, 98.

⁵⁴ Bartelson, 99.

⁵⁵ On the relationship between time, matter, the olfactory, and *Macbeth* see Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 119–40; originally published as "The Smell of *Macbeth*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58.4 (2007): 465–86.

⁵⁶ Since at least the early 1950s, scholars have attempted to gauge *Macbeth's* knowledge of and relationship to King James's political and religious positions, placing Shakespeare on a spectrum of assent or (carefully concealed) dissent; see Lily B. Campbell, "Political Ideas in *Macbeth* IV.iii," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 2.4 (1951): 281–86; Irving Ribner, "Political Doctrine in *Macbeth*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4.2 (1953): 202–5; and Jane H. Jack, "*Macbeth*, King James, and the Bible," *ELH* 22.3 (1955): 173–93. While the tendency to view the play as a direct attempt to curry favor with James continued with George Walton Williams, "*Macbeth*: King James's Play," *South Atlantic Review* 47.2 (1982): 12–21, Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson's "*Macbeth*, the Jacobean Scot, and the Politics of the Union," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 47.2 (2007): 379–401, attends to *Macbeth's* vacillating relationship between competing positions on the union of England and Ireland.

⁵⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1987), 76–77.

⁵⁸ For further explorations of the intertwining of children, affect, and sexuality, see "Killing Shakespeare's Children."

⁵⁹ According to Geoffrey Bullough, Raphael Holinshed tells us that “Duncan was young and his reign (1034–40) was made unhappy by military defeats. . . . We cannot say, but there seems to have been little general regret when he was murdered by Macbeth and other nobles” (*Major Tragedies: “Hamlet,” “Othello,” “King Lear,” “Macbeth,”* vol. 7 of *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973], 432). The children, in the wake of their father’s death, were more wards than refugees: “After their father’s murder Duncan’s sons . . . were kept in Scotland for a time. (They must have been young children)” (433). Further, Malcolm then became the pawn (and justification) for a Northumbrian invasion at the behest of Duncan’s brother-in-law Siward.

⁶⁰ See Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975); and L. C. Knights, *Explorations* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1946).

⁶¹ Ann Blake sees Shakespeare’s children “as victims . . . in need of protection from adult wickedness” (“Children and Suffering in Shakespeare’s Plays,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 23 [1993]: 293, 295). “Perfect innocence,” Blake remarks, “is only possible in children” (301). See also Blake’s “Shakespeare’s Roles for Children: A Stage History,” *Theatre Notebook* 48.3 (1994): 122–37. Mark Heberle finds in those children an innocence in need of nurture, claiming that “Shakespeare graphically pays homage to both the potential and the integrity of childhood and suggests that protecting, nurturing, and assisting the child is fundamental to that just political order so rarely found in the history plays, or in the world outside the theatre” (“‘Innocent Prate’: *King John* and Shakespearean Children” in *Infant Tongues*, ed. Elizabeth Goodenough and Mark Heberle [Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1994], 40). Such vulnerability, for Heberle, must be associated with the etymology of *infans* (incapable of speech), making childhood innocence coincide with a lack of self-representation and agency. Morriss Henry Partee finds the innocent Shakespearean child endowed with anxiety and ambivalence due to an “indifferent or hostile adult environment” (“Fear in Shakespearean Childhood,” *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 44.1–2 [1990]: 70). See also Partee’s “Shakespeare and the Aggression of Children,” *University of Mississippi Studies in English* 10 (1992): 122–33. The presumed innocence of the child offers the teasing possibility of surviving to represent Edenic innocence and dynastic longevity. Indeed, Richard Quinones argues that children represented to early modern thinkers “the thrill of continuity, the illumination of some victory wrested from time” (*The Renaissance Discovery of Time* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972], 25).

⁶² Carol Chillington Rutter, introduction to *Macbeth* (London: Penguin, 2005), xxv. See also Rutter’s “Looking Like a Child—or—*Titus*: The Comedy,” *Shakespeare Survey* 56 (2003): 1–26; and “Remind Me: How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?” *Shakespeare Survey* 57 (2004): 38–53, which are collected in *Shakespeare and Child’s Play: Lost Boys on the Stage and Screen* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁶³ Levinas, 129.

⁶⁴ See, for example, Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum, *The History of the Hour* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996); and Carlo Cipolla, *Clocks and Culture, 1300–1700* (New York: Walker, 1967).

⁶⁵ Levinas, 77.

⁶⁶ In the exchange between mother and child (4.2), the son describes himself as a bird, one that scavenges and makes do with circumstance. The mother, however, translates a symbol of pragmatism into an object of sentimentality, a “poor bird” that is picked up by Macduff later when he learns of his family’s death:

All my pretty ones?
Did you say all? . . .
What all my pretty chickens and their dam,
At one fell swoop?

(4.3.216–18)

⁶⁷ See particularly Mervyn James, *Family, Lineage, and Civil Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); and Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558–1641* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965).

⁶⁸ Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 261–62.

⁶⁹ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *Later Political Writings*, ed. and trans. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 109.

⁷⁰ On the child of George, Duke of Clarence, Polydore Vergil remarks, “Henry, not unaware of the mob’s natural tendency always to seek changes, was fearful lest, if the boy should escape and given any alteration in circumstances, he might stir up civil discord” (*The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, A.D. 1485–1537*, ed. Denys Hay [London: Royal Historical Society, 1950], 3).

⁷¹ See Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales: And England’s Lost Renaissance* (London: Pimlico, 2000).