

“O ME! ‘TIS MY MOTHER:”
RETHINKING THE ROLE
OF MOTHERHOOD IN
SHAKESPEARE’S *KING JOHN*

OFIR CALAHAN



WRITER’S COMMENT: I wrote this paper for Professor Gina Bloom’s ENL 153 class which focused on advanced Shakespeare studies. Professor Bloom gave us a lot of freedom to choose our topics for this paper as long as we found a way to engage with Shakespeare scholarship. I knew right away I wanted to study King John, a play I love despite (or maybe because of) its relative obscurity. Perhaps because I began planning the paper around Mother’s Day, I chose to focus on motherhood. Mothers in Shakespeare, as in life, are a complex subject that warrant special consideration, something I felt was lacking from scholarship on King John. I wanted to find in the play a meaning that would assert its importance in the Shakespeare canon; to find something that made the play stand out from Shakespeare’s better known works, and motherhood provided a path to that end. I hope my paper encourages anyone with an interest in Shakespearean drama to visit King John, as it really is a unique and intriguing piece.

INSTRUCTOR’S COMMENT: Prior to reading Ofir Cahalan’s essay, my memory files on Shakespeare’s King John pulled a few details: a rarely performed play about unsuitable monarchs, the legitimacy of leadership, and male-centric historiography as genealogy. And had I not read Ofir Cahalan’s analysis, King John might have remained unopened on the shelf for many more years. However, in Ofir’s essay, the gender focus changes. Mothers are on stage now, and in a new way. Ofir’s attentive and incisive reading significantly revises the significance that motherhood – and mothers as agents – play dur-

“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in Shakespeare’s King John

ing this “troublesome raigne.” Ofir’s meticulous historicizing enables us to see clearly that Shakespeare not only gives us two mothers who depart from prescribed gender roles. At a time when silence was a feminine virtue, the two mothers speak quite a bit; speech leads to action; and Ofir re-contextualizes the import of those words. These women also understand that sexual infidelity scrambles the writing of patriarchal history. Ofir’s analysis strikes me as so strong because he also removes the attribution of “trouble” from mothers, women whose very strengths scholars invariably (mis) interpret as meddling. Rather than finding meddling mothers, Ofir re-locates the “trouble” to the sons and to patriarchal historiography. Now, we see in a clear-eyed way that the key troubles reside elsewhere: first, in the heirs’ inherent potential for damage to the nation that the mothers work to mitigate; and then in maternity’s potential to “re-write” masculine historiographies.

– Liz Constable, Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies

With good reason, scholars frequently argue that Shakespeare’s *King John* (1623) centers on patriarchal legitimacy and matriarchal ambition. The play deals with the succession to the throne of King Richard the Lionheart who died without a legitimate heir, and with the formation of the Plantaganet dynasty, on whose descendents so many of Shakespeare’s history plays focus their attention. *King John*, set in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, is unique in that it takes place roughly two hundred years before any of Shakespeare’s other histories. At the play’s start, John, the youngest but only surviving son of King Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine – and younger brother to the deceased King Richard – holds the English throne with his mother’s support. The play’s conflict turns on contested claims to rule England, a right to which John, his nephew Arthur, and in some radical readings, the bastard son of King Richard, Philip, all have a claim. Arthur is the adolescent son of John’s older, but also deceased, brother Geoffrey. He is aligned with the King of France, who has promised to defeat John in battle and place Arthur on the English throne as his ally or perhaps as his puppet. By the play’s end, both John and Arthur die, and only John’s son remains to assume the English throne as King Henry III, to whom Philip

the Bastard pledges his loyalty, shoring up any questions of succession. However, *King John* is also unique in foregrounding mothers who participate in the action: their words, actions, and impact on the play's meaning make the play even more unusual and call for a re-thinking of critical interpretations of motherhood in *King John*.

John and Arthur are commonly and accurately characterized as weak leaders, and scholars often attribute that weakness to the potential heirs' reliance on their mothers for protection and power. Read through this lens, the adolescent Arthur is escorted by his mother, Constance, who speaks for him through much of the first half of the play and actively pushes for his ascent to the throne. John, an adult, is also accompanied by his mother, Queen Eleanor, and he delegates significant powers to her. Early in the play she first scolds him for not heeding her advice; then, she follows him to war in France and takes part in the negotiations where, ultimately, she deploys a fair amount of political savvy.

Such evidence leads scholars to interpret Eleanor's and Constance's maternal presence as domineering and contrary to Early Modern constructs of ideal motherhood. Ideal behavior for a Queen-mother entails what Katheryn Schwarz refers to as a "vanishing act" (228). Mothers are not supposed to participate in their sons' affairs, and overly involved mothers are often linked to witchcraft. Mary Beth Rose corroborates this notion of Early Modern maternity, describing "the best mother" as an "absent or dead mother" resulting in an ideal society where all maternal desire is sacrificed. This describes the mothers in the second tetralogy of the plays *Richard II* through *Henry V*. In these plays, mothers are alluded to, but invariably absent, and play no role in the action. Given this Early Modern construct of motherhood, Ian McAdam calls both mothers in *King John* "dominating" (71). And Schwarz argues that these women pose a threat to their children's masculinity through their emasculating envelopment of their sons, tantamount to castration (227). If we interpret the play through this construct of motherhood, Constance and Eleanor clearly violate the social order.

And indeed, Shakespeare and Early Modern scholars offer many interpretations that present overbearing mothers as threats to their sons. Dympna Callaghan outlines this power structure in her essay, "Wicked Women of Macbeth." She shows how the patriarchal, patrilineal, structure of sixteenth-century English government revolves around a linear axis where the husband's power in his home and the King's power

“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” *Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in Shakespeare’s King John*

over his land are both analogous to (and legitimized by) God’s dominion over the Earth (Callaghan 357). The antithesis of this alignment of God/King/Husband is demonic insurrection, as Peter Stallybrass puts it, where “the Devil attempts to rule over the earth, and the woman over the family” (qtd in Callaghan 357). From this perspective, matriarchal control threatens far more than a son’s or husband’s role: it is a threat to Christian divinity.

In supporting this view of demonic matriarchal control, critics of *King John* have often looked to Arthur’s mother Constance’s verbal outbursts and to Queen Eleanor’s possible political maneuvering. However, I will demonstrate that critics misinterpret this evidence by taking it out of context. I contend, instead, that the play presents a strikingly different view of motherhood. *King John*, I argue, recognizes patriarchy as a complex political system and suggests that paternity alone does not provide stability. The play is not concerned with the anarchy that some Early Modernists associate with powerful women. Instead, *King John*’s depictions of positive maternal influences in a flawed patriarchal system posits the radical interpretation that matriarchy is not a demonic alternative to patriarchy, but rather a system that shows promise in the absence of effective male leadership.

Patriarchal Weakness

As I show, to argue that John’s and Arthur’s weakness stems from maternal dominance is fallacious; the active role their mothers take in their rule results from the men’s weakness rather than causing it. The central issue of the play turns on a choice between two *undesirable* leaders. The adolescent Arthur should be king by right of blood, but he is overpowered by his older uncle who has the support of England’s nobility and the Queen-mother, as well as a legal will from King Richard declaring John his successor. Arthur’s weakness in this play stems primarily from his youth, and Shakespeare’s text foregrounds Arthur’s youthful immaturity over other qualities on several occasions.¹ Arthur is perpetually in the company of guardians in Acts II and III who frequently usher him across the stage. Evelyn Tribble writes that Arthur’s time on stage is filled with embedded cues. On Arthur’s entrance to the stage, King Philip gives “explicit instruction to Arthur to ‘embrace,’ ‘love,’ and ‘give welcome’ to the Duke of Austria” (Tribble 143). Arthur rarely speaks or moves

without a cue from someone else, usually King Philip. We get a sense from Act II that if Arthur is dominated by anyone, it is by King Philip who tells John “In right of Arthur do I claim of thee” the territories of England (II, i, 153). King Philip is as much a usurper as John here, using Arthur’s right to stake his own claim. Even John tells the King he “dost usurp [Arthur’s] authority” to which Philip agrees, remarking “Excuse it is to beat usurping down” (II, i, 118-9). Either John or King Philip could take on a role as a father figure for Arthur if they chose, but neither does. The closest anyone comes to filling this void in Act II is the Duke of Austria, who pledges he will never return home until Arthur has won his kingdom (II, i, 22-30). Constance responds by thanking Austria, invoking her motherhood and widowhood, and telling him that his “strong hand shall help to give [Arthur] strength” (33). Constance promotes her son because he is not yet strong enough to do it himself, and because no father figure steps up to guide him, but she shows a willingness to entrust his care to a strong male figure. Arthur’s weakness stems not from his maternal dependence, but rather, from his misfortune to be a child. Shakespeare’s text even intimates that Arthur could develop into a much stronger king if given the time to mature.

After spending time in the English court, Arthur learns to defend himself quite well. He masterfully convinces Hubert to go against John’s orders and not execute him, a stunning blow to patriarchal authority. In as vulnerable a position as we have ever seen him, Arthur talks his way out of his execution by appealing to Hubert’s pathos. He describes the fire that heats the iron Hubert will use to put out his eyes as “dead with grief / Being create for comfort, to be used / in undeserved extremes” (IV, i, 106-8). By assigning feminine attributes of comfort and protection to the fire, and by telling Hubert he will “make [the fire] blush” if Hubert tries to build it up again to hurt him (113), Arthur’s appeal is ultimately successful. Hubert breaks his promise to his Lord and acts in opposition to patriarchal authority.

If Arthur’s weakness results from his youth, John’s emerges through his actions. John makes several critical errors of judgment, many of which his mother would have prevented if she had had more authority. Eleanor begins the play by chiding John about his handling of Constance, telling him “This might have been prevented and made whole / With very easy arguments of love” (I, i, 35-6). She had previously warned John about Constance and Arthur, yet John ignored her. Rather than reconciling with

*“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in
Shakespeare’s King John*

Arthur as his mother suggested, they must now rely on “fearful bloody issue” to “arbitrate” the conflict (38). Throughout the play, the word “issue” refers to children as a product of their mothers from childbirth, specifically Arthur, as when Constance calls Arthur the “removed issue” of his grandmother Eleanor (II, i, 186). However, by referring to war as the issue of John’s actions, Eleanor credits him with engendering war. Whereas a mother creates life through childbirth, a father destroys life through warfare. Warfare is the patriarchal method of solving problems, and in *King John*, its results are disastrous.

John makes his gravest mistake – his decision to kill the captured Arthur – without the approval of his mother. While John talks Hubert into committing murder, Eleanor is in private conversation with Arthur, and Eleanor is absent from all the decision-making prior to Arthur’s death. John’s manipulation of Hubert starts with subtlety and craft, relying on Hubert’s love of both patriarchy and affection for John himself. By telling Hubert, “by my troth, I think thou lov’st me well” (III, iii, 55), John elicits Hubert’s affirmation of love. However, even John has difficulty broaching the murder of his nephew; he tiptoes around the topic until finally blurting out the words “Death,” then “A Grave,” and finally “Enough” (66). John’s language breaks down into convulsive exclamations at such a repellent prospect, and his rule collapses shortly after. When Arthur dies by leaping from John’s castle, John is blamed and as a result, the English nobility abandon him to join with the invading French army. The misguided decision that John makes on his own proves his ultimate undoing, not an overbearing mother.

John’s floundering continues after he learns of his mother’s death, as if this causes him to lose his ability to lead. After learning of Eleanor’s death, John resolves his feud with the Pope by making peace with the Cardinal Pandulph (V, i, 1-2). Rather than continue to oppose Rome, John submits, and even briefly offers his crown to Pandulph to formally secure England’s ties to Rome. At this point, John remembers that it is Ascension Day, the day a prophet warned John he would give up his crown (V, i, 25-9). He muses that he understood the prophecy to mean he would be forced from power, but instead has had merely to offer to relinquish his crown to Pandulph. However, forty lines later, the prophecy will ring truer than John realizes. On learning that his nobles have turned on him, and that the French are invading, he tells the Bastard, “Have thou the ordering of this present time,” effectively putting the Bastard

in charge of England's defense (V, i, 77). Since John's authority comes primarily from his control of the English military,² by handing that control over to the Bastard, John makes the Bastard the *de facto* king of England. Under pressure and without his mother, John doesn't lead his people but rather relies on others to lead for him, and removes himself from situations which require confrontation.

John's and Arthur's weaknesses function to expose the complexities within the patriarchal system foundational to monarchical authority. The play's major tension stems from the two equally undesirable contenders for the throne. John and Arthur represent two means of inheritance and authority under a patriarchal system. John represents legal right, and Arthur blood right. John possesses a legal will from his older brother, King Richard, declaring John his heir, whereas Arthur, by virtue of being the son of John's older brother Geoffrey, has a right by his blood. Arthur's claim may seem to establish him as the clear heir by birth,³ but Philip the Bastard complicates this. If blood takes precedence, then the Bastard should be king since he is Richard's son. And yet, illegitimacy coupled with the Bastard's lack of desire to be king disqualify his claim to the throne. It is clear that blood alone is not enough to determine authority: some concession to the law, particularly legal marriage, must be made for either John or Arthur to be king. Patriarchal authority, then, proves much less straightforward than either side would make it seem, and patrilineal descent does not answer the question of inheritance.

Maternity, Stability, and Legitimacy

So if patriarchal authority does not guarantee stable government and effective rule, what does this mean for our mothers in the play? We have seen that maternal influence benefits the sons in *King John*, but the maternal role is more powerful still. Maternity serves to dictate the terms of patriarchy, and in doing so, mothers also expose its shortcomings. Regardless of how John or Arthur prove their claim, both depend on their birth for authority: their respective mothers determine their legitimacy. From the play's opening scene, where John hears the dispute between the two Faulconbridge boys, maternity is central. The initial dispute sets up all of the problems of legitimacy and patriarchy the play addresses, and the end result is that maternity proves a more reliable means of determining legitimacy than any other in the play. When Essex first comes to tell John

*“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in
Shakespeare’s King John*

of the dispute between the two Faulconbridges, he calls it “the strangest controversy . . . That e’er [he] heard” (I, i, 44-6). The controversy is, of course, that the younger son of Sir Robert Faulconbridge is trying to dispossess his older brother Philip of his inheritance by asserting that Philip is a bastard. What shocks Essex about this is not readily apparent to the audience, and it certainly doesn’t seem like “the strangest controversy” ever. However, Essex resorts to hyperbole because Philip’s bastardy results from his mother’s infidelity. Unfaithful wives pose a fundamental threat to the system of primogeniture as we will see. John himself asks the two boys, “Is that the elder, and art thou the heir? / You came not of one mother it would seem” (I, i, 57-8). John first assumes that their father was unfaithful and took a mistress by which Philip was born. The idea of an unfaithful mother doesn’t enter his head, and when Philip suggests that is the case, Eleanor shames him for even considering it (64-5). When the younger Robert Faulconbridge claims that King Richard impregnated their mother with Philip, and that their father willed on his deathbed that his younger son should be his heir, John dismisses this evidence and rules in favor of Philip. John ultimately rules that “My mother’s son did get your father’s heir; / Your father’s heir must have your father’s land” (I, i, 128-9). Because they have the same mother, and because Philip was conceived within wedlock, Philip must be Sir Robert’s heir regardless of who his true father is. Motherhood proves to be a more stable indicator of succession because it is much easier to confirm maternity than paternity.

John’s ruling in this case has often puzzled scholars because it appears hypocritical to ignore the will of Sir Robert since John derives his own authority from King Richard’s will. One common argument proposes that Shakespeare shows John’s faults so he would appear more despicable. But, I propose another possibility, whose roots lie in Essex’s hyperbole discussed above. The strangeness that Essex attributes to this case results not from its uniqueness – certainly the possibility of a woman forced to have sex with a more powerful man would not be considered unique – but rather from the threat it poses to patriarchy. Unfaithful women, even ones who are raped, threaten primogeniture by exposing patriarchal authority’s dependence on the word of a woman. In a time long before DNA, or paternity tests, the whole system becomes suspect if female fidelity is called into question. Essex’s shock is not genuine in this reading, but rather a way of asserting how uncommon, perhaps even isolated, women’s infidelity *ought* to be.

In Act II, when both Constance and Eleanor accuse the other of infidelity, we learn that female infidelity is not as uncommon as Essex would imply. Each fights to promote her own son's right by attempting to discredit her competitor's mother. Eleanor goes so far as to call Arthur a bastard (II, i, 122) and Constance refers to Eleanor as a "cankered grandam" (194) implying she has a sexually transmitted disease. Schwarz touches on this and sees it as a point of anxiety for the play because it is left to women to argue for the terms of patriarchal succession (Schwarz 240). However, we also see King Philip's attempts to control the argument. For example, after Constance rebukes Eleanor, he tells her to "Pause, or be more temperate" (II, i, 195), and calls her insult an "ill-tuned repetition" (197). While Constance's insult promotes King Philip's immediate goal of using Arthur to gain power in England, it also undermines the patriarchal values central to the French monarch's authority. For this reason, he deems Constance's insult profane since a challenge to patriarchy remains unacceptable even for the oft opportunistic king of France.

While Schwarz claims that Constance and Eleanor threaten to engulf and destroy their sons through their over-advocacy (226-7), I argue that this concern is unfounded. Constance's push for Arthur's right to rule results in warfare and Arthur's death. Once Constance's attempts fail, she resorts to cursing. On learning the King of France has made peace with John, and that this peace does not include Arthur's coronation, Constance curses both the French and English, begging the heavens to "Set armed discord 'twixt these perjured kings!" (III, i, 111). Not sixty lines later, John is excommunicated from the church, and by the close of the scene, the French declare war on England for disobeying the Pope. Constance displays almost un-Earthly powers of premonition, and while she calls on heaven for assistance, her rhetoric is far from divine. At the height of her rage, Constance can barely form sentences, yelling "War! War! No peace!" (113) in an attempt to promote anarchy and destabilization over peace and diplomacy. This scene leads scholars to view Constance as evidence of the menacingly anti-patriarchal model of government Callaghan finds in *Macbeth*. However, Constance's outburst is entirely justifiable for a woman in her position. She has just learned that the King of France, Philip, is more concerned with political convenience than with Arthur's potential reign. As I show, far more evidence in the play suggests that women strengthen government rather than weakening it.

“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in Shakespeare’s King John

When we turn to examine Queen Eleanor’s behavior, we see her as a stabilizing force during a chaotic time. While McAdam describes Eleanor as a mother who “dominates and directs [John] in various crucial asides” (McAdam 71), careful analysis reveals that Eleanor is not a domineering presence. As I show earlier, Eleanor chides John for not heeding her advice, but that very chiding proves that John is not subject to his mother’s demands: for better or for worse, he makes his own decisions. Rather than seeking to dominate the English court, a task she is more than capable of accomplishing, Eleanor works with her son to incorporate supporters and strengthen the Plantagenet dynasty. We first see this in her treatment of Philip the Bastard in Act I. Eleanor spots Philip’s likeness to her son King Richard before anyone even suggests Richard might be his father. She asks John “Do you not read some tokens of my son / In the large composition of this man?” (I, i, 87-88). Her maternal instincts cause her to recognize the similarities between Philip and his true father. Likewise, Eleanor is also the one to offer Philip a knighthood. John contents himself with dismissing the younger Faulconbridge’s case, but despite her son’s ruling, Eleanor asks Philip “Wilt thou forsake thy fortune,/ Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?” (148-9). Her language here discloses her character since she does not insist Philip do this. She proposes the option, and while she asks him to follow her, her next lines see her telling Philip to go before her and lead the way to France. She does not incorporate Philip into her family to manipulate him; instead, she wants him to strengthen her family. Unbeknownst to anyone, the addition of Philip proves to be one of the most important decisions in the play because of his significance when the French invade England.

When Philip disinherits himself, he also defers to maternal authority. First, as we saw earlier, Eleanor determines his likeness to Richard and offers him a place in her family as her grandson. Later, Philip confronts his own mother and insists on hearing from her who his real father is. At this point, he has already been knighted a Plantagenet and no further evidence is required. But, for his own personal reasons, he must hear the truth from his mother. When his mother tells him his father is King Richard, this finally satisfies him. Whether Philip decides to be a Faulconbridge or a Plantagenet, his mother proves his parentage.

Eleanor continues her attempts to incorporate members into her family when dealing with Arthur later in the play. As I showed earlier,

Eleanor prefers diplomatic solutions to violence and does not hesitate to invite family into the fold. Critics and directors have often read her invitation to Arthur to “Come to thy grandam” in Act II as suspicious (II, i,159). However her talk with Philip, one scene earlier, shows her sincerity. Eleanor’s desire to include both Philip and Arthur in her family shows a constructive form of motherhood in direct contrast with the overbearing mother Schwarz presents. Rather than destroy Philip, Eleanor provides him with a chance to flourish, and he finishes the play as arguably the most successful character, save perhaps for Prince Henry. Eleanor’s version of England, centered around the family, imagines a place for everyone. This is not the witch-filled anarchy destined to ensue when women take a larger role in government or family. Her involvement benefits Philip, and probably would have saved Arthur. With Eleanor we see a positive reinvention of the power axis described earlier. There is room for maternity beside patriarchy, and the result need not be chaos. Any argument that the works of Shakespeare favor a strict patriarchal structure has overlooked this unique work in the canon.

Reconsidering Shakespeare’s Other Mothers

If we accept the positive view of motherhood shown in *King John*, we open up new avenues for re-thinking mothers and maternal roles not only in Shakespeare’s histories, but in his other plays as well. Consider *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Titania’s account of her friendship with the pregnant mother of the changeling boy. Titania gives a long description of the woman’s pregnancy, yet does not mention a father. Alan Sinfield describes this as a “marvelous pregnancy” where “the father is scarcely needed” (77). Oberon’s conflicting desire to take the changeling boy for himself attempts to assert patriarchal dominance where maternity has proven self-sufficient. Nor is this lense limited to comedies: mothers also play significant roles in Shakespeare’s tragedies. The central conflict of *Titus Andronicus* arises from Titus’ murder of Tamora’s eldest son. He ignores a mother’s pleas to spare her son and focuses instead on his patriarchal duty to see his religious rites satisfied, which demand blood. By assigning more value to the role mothers play in Shakespeare, we can determine Titus’ tragic flaw as a failure to respect Tamora’s motherhood, resulting in their respective demises. Rethinking the roles of mothers in Shakespeare’s plays opens doors to new critical interpretations, and *King*

“O me! ‘Tis my mother:” *Rethinking the Role of Motherhood in
Shakespeare’s King John*

John, an odd transitional play – often ignored but ever relevant – holds the key.

Notes

1. One of the primary concerns over a potential King Arthur was his birth and upbringing in France; he had possibly never been to England. Shakespeare, however, focuses primarily on Arthur’s youth, minimizes Arthur’s nationality, and instead attributes his weakness to immaturity (Levine 130).

2. Eleanor informs John at the start of the play that it is his “strong possession” that keeps him in power (I, i, 40). John also asks the people of Angiers “Doth not the crown of England prove the king? / And if not that, I bring you witness, / Twice fifteen thousand hearts of England’s breed” (II, i, 273-5). He uses his army as proof of his right to rule.

3. A 1543 act of Parliament gave Henry VIII the power to rewrite the terms of his succession to allow the crown to pass to whomever he saw fit in the event all of his children died childless. He had recourse to this in a futile attempt to bar the Stuarts from the throne in favor of the Suffolks, despite the fact that the Stuarts were closer in blood to the English royalty than the Suffolks. Prior to this act, no legal acknowledgment existed to authorize a king’s right to steer the succession away from his bloodline. Richard I’s will, naming John his heir, would not have been considered valid, though oddly (and complicatedly) this served as precedent to establish the 1543 law (Levine 127). Regardless of the law, the crown still passed to the Stuarts upon Elizabeth I’s death, so nearness of blood still proved more important than legal will.

Works Cited

- Callaghan, Dymphna C. “Wicked Women in Macbeth: A Study of Power, Ideology, and the Production of Motherhood.” *Reconsidering the Renaissance*. 1992. 355-69. Print.
- Levine, Nina S. *Women’s Matters: Politics, Gender, and Nation in Shakespeare’s Early History Plays*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998. Print.

- McAdam, Ian. "Masculine Agency And Moral Stance In Shakespeare's King John." *Philological Quarterly* 86.1/2 (2007): 67-95. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 7 June 2016.
- Rose, Mary Beth. "Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 42 (1991). 291-314. Web. 6 June 2016.
- Sinfield, Alan. *Shakespeare, Authority, Sexuality: Unfinished Business in Cultural Materialism*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Life and Death of King John. The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*. Eds. Stephen Orgel and A. R. Braunmuller. New York: Penguin, 2002. 1005-1038. Print.
- Schwarz, Katheryn. "A Tragedy of Good Intentions: Maternal Agency in 3 Henry VI and King John." *Renaissance Drama*. 32. 225-54. 2003. Web. 6 June 2016.
- Tribble, Evelyn B. *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011. Print.