

‘What are these faces?’
Interpreting Bearded Women in *Macbeth*

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On the 16th of February 1631, Magdalena Ventura stands next to her husband while her infant son suckles on her exposed breast. As fate would have it, this scene has been masterfully captured on canvas by Jusepe de Ribera, under instructions to do so by Ferdinand II, Third Duke of Alcalá. The purpose of the painting (**Figure 4**) is announced to the viewer in large, capital letters on a stone plinth positioned next to Magdalena: ‘EN MAGNVM NATVRAE MIRACVLVM’. At first glance, there seems little to indicate that Ribera has portrayed a ‘great wonder of nature’. That is, until the viewer realizes that there are two bearded figures in the painting: and the woman breast-feeding her child is one of them. The viewer—perhaps experiencing shock, awe, revulsion, or any combination of these—then turns to the rest of the superimposed inscription on the plinth to read that Magdalena was aged thirty-seven when she began to become hairy and grew a beard, so long and thick that it seemed more like that of a gentleman than that of a mother who had borne three sons by her husband.¹ For good measure, the gender ambiguity that pervades the scene is reinforced iconographically by the inclusion of a spindle of wool and a snail on top of the plinth: the former a symbol of feminine domesticity, the latter of the hermaphrodite.

According to the earliest text of



Figure 4: Jusepe de Ribera, *Magdalena Ventura with Her Husband and Son*. 1631. Oil on canvas. By permission of the Fundación Casa Ducal de Medinaceli, Seville.

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* available to us—the First Folio of 1623—audiences of early performances of the play in Jacobean London presumably experienced a similar spectacle on the stage, as Macbeth and Banquo first approach the weyward Sisters:

Banquo. How farre is't call'd to Soris? What are these,
So wither'd, and so wilde in their attyre,
That looke not like th' Inhabitants o'th' Earth,
And yet are on't? Liue you, or are you aught
That man may question? you seeme to vnderstand me,
By each at once her choppie finger laying
Vpon her skinnie Lips: you should be Women,
And yet your Beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.

(138–46; 1. 3. 37–45)

Critical assessment of Banquo's comment in this early scene—that the presence of beards prohibits his identifying the Sisters as women—have ranged between regarding the line as 'an act of genius or a happy accident',² through to the more serious accusations of 'unbridled sensationalism' on Shakespeare's part, since such representations 'refuse any serious engagement with witchcraft' in favour of 'a low-budget, frankly exploitative collage of randomly chosen bits of witch-lore',³ ultimately suppressing the voices and concerns of those who have witnessed or experienced the reality of witchcraft persecutions.

This essay seeks to reconstruct how an individual in the audience of an early performance of *Macbeth*, like Banquo, might have interpreted these bearded women, drawing on contemporary accounts of witches, pamphlet literature on fashion, medical treatises, the lives of saints, popular ballads, ethnographic reports, and travel literature. In light of these different cognitive strands, it is the argument of this chapter that regardless of whether Shakespeare's deviation from his source is deliberate or not, or even his own, that the variety of possible audience responses to the bearded women on display onstage are all significant, and that they enrich our understanding of both the play itself, and the culture that produced and consumed it.

It is worth noting at the outset that this essay relies on the assumption that the weyward Sisters were staged as bearded.⁴ This is an important assumption, since it undermines the only available account of an early performance of *Macbeth* available to us: that of Simon Forman. Forman's account of the production he attended in 1611 makes no reference to the Sisters as having beards, describing them as '3 women feiries or Nymphes'.⁵ This has led some critics to conclude that the beards were only incorporated into the play later in a revision by Middleton to allow for the increasing number of parts for boy actors,⁶ or that the account is evidence of a 'lost text' of the play.⁷

While it is certainly possible that the beards are a later revision, it is just as likely that they were present in earlier performances of the play. As countless scholars have noted, Forman's account of the play deviates markedly from the playtext, leaving out entire scenes and introducing others that are not present in the Folio.⁸ That his account of the play does not describe the Sisters as bearded does not of itself prove that this was the case, since it appears that Forman's account of the performance has been corrupted by his recollection of Shakespeare's sources, in particular the *Chronicles* of Raphael Holinshed, in which the Sisters are described as 'Goddesses of destinie, or els some Nimphes or Feiries',⁹ with an accompanying woodcut (**Figure 5**) depicting the Sisters as 'young and attractive females, well coiffed and richly dressed',¹⁰ with apparently little correlation to the narrative in which it appears.



Figure 5: Woodcut from Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande*. London, 1577. Courtesy of the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania.

Further, textual scholarship has yet to establish with any certainty the exact nature of Middleton's relationship to the text of *Macbeth* as we know it. While it seems clear that his hand was present at least in the additional songs and witch scenes later in the play, there seems little to suggest that Banquo's description of the Sisters as bearded was one of these later revisions. Finally, while Forman's account omits references to the Sisters as bearded—since one assumes that Forman understood nymphs and fairies as we tend to, that is, without beards—there is little evidence to suggest that they were not presented as such. The false beard was an important prop in the early modern theatre, with a variety of colours and shapes available to suit every need.¹¹

The use of prosthetic beards on stage was evidently popular enough to merit satire and dramatization, such as Bottom's quibble in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* over which beard he should wear (351–58; 1. 2. 83–89), or the postponement of the play in *The Book of Sir Thomas More* by one of the players while he sends 'for a long beard' to borrow for the performance.¹² While it is possible that Forman's account is accurate—that the Sisters were not staged as bearded women—the prevalence of using false beards in the Jacobean theatre coupled with the problems with Forman's account itself suggests that it is more likely that an audience actually saw what Banquo described.

I. Bearded Witches

Jacobean audiences, much like audiences today, would have immediately recognized the bearded Sisters as witches. Although the pamphlet literature on witchcraft and witchcraft trials is silent on the presence of beards,¹³ the link between bearded women and witchcraft seems to be firmly embedded into the cultural consciousness of early modern England. Perhaps there are no explicit references to beards in the records simply because it went without saying: to borrow from Mark Twain, 'deformity and female beards' may have been 'too common' in these cases 'to attract attention'.¹⁴

Whatever the reason for this silence in the archives, the association is frequently made on stage. When Falstaff disguises himself as a woman in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the reaction he receives from Evans is to be taunted as 'a witch indeede' since he appears to be a woman with 'a great peard' (2076–77; 4. 2. 179–80). Similarly, in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Honest Man's Fortune*, Longaville describes women turning to witchcraft for revenge:

Thus the bauds would all turn witches to revenge
Themselves upon us and the women that
Come to us, for disguises must wear beards,
And that's they say, a token of a witch.¹⁵

The same reasoning occurs in the first part of Thomas Dekker's *The Honest Whore*, where the servant does not admit a messenger with 'haire at his mouth, for feare he should be a woman', on the basis that 'some women haue beardes' and that 'mary they are halfe witches' (sig. G3^R). While it seems that the association of bearded women with witchcraft is more prevalent in works of comedy, it does occur outside the genre as well: in *King Lear* Goneril is described as 'with a white beard' (2543; 4. 5. 96), and Leontes's description of Paulina as a 'mankind Witch' (981; 2. 3. 68) and 'a grosse Hagge' (1031; 2. 3. 108) are all suggestive of the connection between witchcraft and bearded women.

The beard as a token of a witch forms part of a wider association of monstrosity with diabolism and the supernatural.¹⁶ According to both popular superstition and

‘learned’ witchcraft treatises, the body of the witch was supposed to be physically deformed, as an outward manifestation of inward, moral aberration, or branded by the Devil. As Reginald Scot reports, ‘one sort of such as are said to bee witches, are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles’, or ‘miserable wretches’, ‘odious vnto all their neighbors’.¹⁷ For example, in *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser’s lengthy description of the deformed witch Duessa concludes by stating that she is ‘more vgly [in] shape yet neuer liuing creature saw’.¹⁸ Elizabeth Sawyer, the title role in *The Witch of Edmonton*, is taken for a witch since she is ‘poor, deform’d and ignorant’, and has only one eye.¹⁹ In light of the popular perceptions of witches as physically deformed, and the common assessment of bearded women as witches on stage, it is clear that many members of the Jacobean audience watching *Macbeth* would have interpreted the bearded Sisters, ‘so wither’d, and so wilde in their attyre’ (139; 1. 3. 38), as witches.

II. Bearded Saints

A young woman is pledged to marry a pagan king by her father. To preserve her vows of chastity and desire to live a pious life, she prays to God for deliverance. The morning of the wedding it becomes apparent to all that her prayers have been answered: overnight she has sprouted a beard so lavish that her veil cannot conceal it from the now (understandably) upset groom, who refuses to go through with the marriage. Her father, furious at this miraculous turn of events, has her crucified.

This is the legend of the virgin and martyred Saint Uncumber, known also as Wilgefortis and by many other names throughout Europe, whose popularity continued throughout the late medieval period and into the early modern. It is now believed that the Uncumber legend is the result of a case of mistaken identity, attached to the statue of the Volto Santo in Italy:

Lead badges of the statue were brought home by pilgrims on their hats and tunics, and other equally crudely made small copies circulated widely, rather like models of the Eiffel Tower or the Leaning Tower of Pisa bought by tourists today. Now these seemed very strange to people who had never seen either the Volto Santo or a crucified Christ clothed in a long robe. They were soon taken to be figures of a woman, a fully dressed bearded woman stretched out on the cross. But why would a bearded woman be crucified? A legend was constructed to give a rational basis for this figment of pious popular imagination.²⁰

Regardless of how the legend began,²¹ Uncumber became a venerated and popular saint in England. Her statue still stands in the Henry VII Chapel of Westminster Abbey (**Figure 6**), and ‘numerous tapestries and murals of this girl dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries’ are to be found in ‘churches throughout the southern counties’ of England.²² Her story struck a particular resonance with unhappy wives,

since it was said that for ‘a pek of otys she wyll not fayle to vncumber them of their husbandis’.²³

Uncumber was not the only saint to be blessed with a beard to safeguard her virginity. Others, including the bearded Paula of Avila and Saint Galla, form part of the tradition of *virginas deformitate defensa*, where some form of virginal disfigurement (including leprosy, struma, blindness, and insanity) ‘stressing heroic actions or strategies of affliction which are condoned by the Church as necessary for the maintenance of chastity’.²⁴

It is certainly possible that an audience member watching *Macbeth* in Jacobean London may, at that cultural moment, have linked the visual representation of bearded women on stage with memories of the stories of bearded virgin martyrs, or even with the images of the saints themselves. How, then, would such a cognitive association affect an interpretation of the play?

The presence of beards on both the weyward Sisters and the saints operate as an indication of their relationship with the supernatural, whether diabolical or divine. Both the superstitious beliefs surrounding Saint Uncumber and the tale reported by one of the Sisters contain the connected elements of dispatching husbands and food. The witch recounts an incident with a ‘Saylor’s Wife’ who refused to share the ‘Chestnuts in her Lappe’ (101; 1. 3. 3). As a result of being turned away, the witch confides that she will sneak ‘like a Rat without a taylor’ (107; 1. 3. 8) aboard the sailor’s ship to exact her revenge.²⁵ Alternatively, for those wives who ‘can not slepe but slumber’, to ‘giue oates unto saynt Uncumber’ meant the hope of divine assistance in un-encumbering themselves of their husbands, who presumably impaired their sleep by snoring.²⁶ The association between food (offered or rejected) and removing husbands (intentionally or inflicted), while shared by both the stories of the witch and Saint Uncumber, is perhaps a tenuous link at best, but it is certainly one that an audience was able to make during the early performances of *Macbeth* in Jacobean London.



Figure 6: Statue of Saint Uncumber. Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey, London. By permission of the Courtauld Institute of Art.

III. Bearded Bodies

Standing alongside St Thomas's Hospital, the Globe Theatre certainly played to audiences that counted among them doctors, physicians, surgeons, and barber-surgeons. However, these professionals were not the only members of the Jacobean audience to possess some medical knowledge: aside from religious tracts, the printing presses teamed with books on medicine, anatomy, surgery, herbals, and compilations of diverse ways to stay the plague, prolong life, and assuage illness of all kinds. One such publication was *The Historie of Man*, compiled by the physician John Banister in 1578, in which we find the following account:

It is straunge to vs that women haue bearded, albeit not so euery where: for in Caria it is a thyng familiar: whereas some of them beyng a while frutefull, but after widowes, and for that suppressed of naturall course, put on virilitie, being then bearded, hoarie, and chaunged in voice.²⁷

Banister is referring to a tale found in Hippocrates' *Epidemics* in which Phaetousa, the wife of Pytheas and mother to his children, 'stopped menstruating for a long time' after her husband was exiled from their home in Abdera. As a result, 'her body was masculinized and grew hairy all over', she 'grew a beard' and 'her voice became harsh' like that of a man. Hippocrates goes on to report that the physicians attending to her agreed that there was only 'one hope of feminizing her', that is, 'if normal menstruation occurred', but all their attempts to 'bring forth [her] menses' were in vain, and she died shortly afterwards.²⁸

There were many other narrative accounts of women who grew beards in the printed literature available to readers in early modern England. These contemporary accounts, found mostly in continental treatises in translation, include the argument that 'should a beard grow on her chin, and her floures surcease' a woman should 'become as perfect a man, as nature could produce'.²⁹ Others observed that the production of a beard was a significant indication that a change in sex had occurred. For example, Tomaso Garzoni relates the tale of a woman who 'married her-selfe to a man, and the day of her marriage became male, sprouting forth a bearde, with members genitall'. This same individual later 'tooke a wife, being thus (as hee saith) for euer conuerted into a man'.³⁰ The same is repeated in Antonio de Torquemada's *The Spanish Mandeuile of Miracles*, who includes stories of this 'wonderful nouelty' culled from both classical and contemporary sources.³¹ In these reports, it seems to be taken for granted that the transformation of women into men involves growing a beard, since Torquemada feels the need to stress the lack of a beard in one particular case reported by a Portuguese doctor of a woman who

[A]t such age as by the course of nature her flowers should haue come downe, in sted thereof, as though it had before lyen hidden in her belly, there issued forth a

perfect and able member masculine, so that of a woman shee became a man, and was presently clothed in mans habite and apparrell, and her name changed from Marie to Manuell Pacheco ... she shortly afterward married a Gentlewoman of a very Noble house, by whom whether she had any children or no, he writeth not: but onely that she neuer came to haue any beard, retayning alwayes a womanly face & countenance.³²

Perhaps the most famous of these accounts is that given by Montaigne in his essay, 'Of the force of Imagination', which was translated into English by John Florio in 1603. The essay describes a man, who up until the age of twenty-two was 'both knowne and seene to be a woman-childe' named Marie. Apparently this all came to change when straining to leap over something, Marie found that 'where before [s] he was a woman, [s]he sodainly felt the instruments of a man to come out of h[er]'. Adopting her new sex and a new name, the 'woman-childe' Marie became the man *Germane*, who would in later years grow 'a longe bearde'. The event became the subject of a new song for young girls 'to warne one an other' that 'when they are leaping, not to straine themselves overmuch' and not to 'open their legs too wide, for feare they should be turned to boyes, as *Marie Germane* was'.³³

For both physicians and laypersons with an interest in medicine, accounts such as these stood as authoritative testimony that the event of a woman growing a beard, however marvellous a sight, was one that occurred naturally. Indeed, even those authorities that could usually be counted on to assign supernatural causes for such phenomena, namely, the demonologists, conceded that women that produced beards (or even went so far as to *become* men) did so 'not, however, by witchcraft but naturally'.³⁴ How, then, were such transformations explained?

According to the accepted medical knowledge of the age—the Galenic or humoral model of the body—the central constitutional difference between the sexes was that of heat, with male bodies being hotter (and therefore more efficient) than female bodies. Essentially this results in a different 'degree to which [the sexes] refine their superfluties, and also in the way they dispose of them'; thus, 'women lack the special pores through which men produce sweat and beards', since 'they give off their residues through menstruation'.³⁵ For example, Thomas Hill's *The Contemplation of Mankinde* describes the production of the beard using the analogy of an oven:

[M]uch lyke to the smoke of an Ouen heated, that passeth so long through the chinks of the same, untill those passages, through the heate are wholly stopped, that no more smoke can after passe through them. Euen the like, doe the fumosities of man issue forth, into the maner of heares: which are properly named the heares of the Bearde.³⁶

For Hill, the body operates like an oven, with superfluties likened to smoke and fumes. In male bodies, hairiness is evidence of the 'superior' male capacity to refine

and purge superfluities through pores as sweat or as hair. Female bodies, on the other hand, apparently lack these mechanisms for expelling waste, and rely instead on menstruation to do the job. Thus cases of bearded women, such as those reported by Hippocrates or captured on canvas by Ribera, were interpreted as being the result of the female body lacking the ability to properly purge itself by menstruation.

Alternatively, bearded women were thought to have hotter bodies like those of men, which would explain their shared capacity for expelling superfluities in the form of sweat and hair:

And therefore sometime women hot & moyst of complexion haue beards, and in the wise men of colde and drye complexion, haue lyttle beards, and therefore on men that be gelded, growe no beards: for they haue lost the hot members that should breed the hot humour & smoake, the matter of hayre.³⁷

Thus, in the early modern mind, the presence of a beard on a woman was taken to be either a ‘signe and token of [the] heate and of substantiall humour’ usually found in male bodies,³⁸ or as the result of the cessation of menstruation. Further, the cessation of the ‘monethlie melancholike flux or issue of bloud’ in women was linked to ‘weakenesse both of bodie and braine’, occasioned with ‘melancholike imaginations’.³⁹ In these cases of amenorrhea, ‘the same blood not finding any passage, troubleth the braine’ with ‘idle fancies and fond conceipts’, ‘diverse imaginations of horrible spectres’, and ‘fearefull sights’ that have been known to bring some sufferers ‘to throwe and cast themselves into wells or pittes’ or to otherwise ‘destroy themselves by hanging, or some such miserable end’.⁴⁰

It is at this point that the discourses of witchcraft and medicine intersect, since, as we have seen, women who were accused of witchcraft were often elderly and deformed. Likewise, melancholia was a ‘disease that was most likely to affect the malnourished and the elderly’, to which ‘menopausal women’, and those whose menstruation has otherwise ceased, ‘were particularly susceptible’.⁴¹ The authorities that sought to point out the credulity of witchcraft persecutions—including the figures of Reginald Scot and Johannes Weyer—raised this striking correspondence, arguing that witches were, for the most part, elderly women who either confessed to being such as a result of their melancholy delusions, or believed they were so on account of their troubled minds.

To those members of the audience armed with varying degrees of medical knowledge, watching the three bearded Sisters in *Macbeth* would have stirred up recollections of tales of women being suddenly transformed into men, or of descriptions of the reported side effects of menopause. Who are these bearded figures? Are they elderly women who have ceased to menstruate? Do they possess bodies that, like men, produce more heat? Are they in some stage of transformation into men?

Perhaps, if their beards are an indication that they have stopped menstruating, they are also suffering from melancholic delusions: this would certainly explain Lady Macbeth's tortured mind after she has sought to 'make thick [her] blood', to 'stop vp th'accesse, and passage to Remorse' (394–95; 1. 5. 42–43) and (presumably) cease menstruating herself.

In this way, medicine works to demystify what would ordinarily appear to be supernatural: instead of being witches with diabolical powers, the Sisters become menopausal melancholics with symptoms like facial hair and troubled minds. Similarly, Lady Macbeth's later mental instability can be seen as a consequence of her amenorrhoea.⁴² In both cases medical knowledge offers those members of the audience skeptical of the reality of witchcraft a natural model for understanding the spectacles on display.

IV. Fashion and Travel: Beards at Home and Abroad

As Will Fisher has recently shown, 'sex was materialized through an array of features and prosthetic parts' (157), that is, that both genital and non-genital markers of sexual difference, such as beards, items of clothing, hair, and weapons, were constitutive elements of gendered identity in early modern culture. For Fisher, in the Renaissance 'the beard was one of the primary ways in which masculinity was materialized', and 'not simply a 'secondary' sexual characteristic' (184), challenging the exclusively genital focus of the model of sexual difference posited by Thomas Laqueur.⁴³ Similarly, Mark Johnston has argued that the beard, 'as both a linguistic and physical entity', was 'the most important of all the visual social signifiers' on the early modern English stage, 'signifying in its absence as well as its presence and gesturing toward a complex interplay among masculinity, theatricality, and economics'.⁴⁴

There is certainly a large body of English Renaissance literature to support both Fisher's and Johnston's assertions. In 1553, Piero Valeriano's defence of the growing of beards by ecclesiastical dignitaries, *Pro sacerdotum barbibus*, was translated into English, which states 'that a beard is a token of manly nature, the thyng selfe dothe shewe more playne, than any man can declare', and

It is openly knowen amongst all kyndes of men, that chyldren, women, gelded men, & those that are tender and delycat, are euer sene withoute beardis: and therby it may be easily understande, to whome those that are shauen, may be likened.⁴⁵

This idea, that the beard is a token of manhood, is a common topos in the literature of the Renaissance, and is found variously in religious tracts, pamphlets on fashion, and ethnographic treatises. Thomas Hall, pastor of Kings Norton, wrote that a 'decent growth of the Beard is a signe of Manhood' that is 'given by God to distinguish

the Male from the Female sex'.⁴⁶ As noted by Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, 'every female beardles doth remaine', regardless of age: 'but old and yong her face is still the same'.⁴⁷ A popular ballad of the time, 'A Commendation and Censure of Beards', suggested that a 'beard is a thing / That commands in a King', and

If it be such a thin
Or femal chin,
 To see a beard to sprout,
What a Monster than
May we call that man
 Whose face is quite without?⁴⁸

This sentiment rings true for John Bulwer, since he writes that 'shaving the Chin is justly to be accounted a note of Effeminacy', and that men who 'produce not a Beard, the signe of virility', are therefore 'not without cause' to be called 'women'.⁴⁹ For Bulwer, the absence of a beard, which is 'the naturall Ensigne of Manhood appearing about the mouth', is the greatest evidence of effeminacy, and 'to be seen with a smooth skin like a woman' is 'a shameful metamorphosis' (199) for a man. Bulwer devotes entire pages on this 'piacular' and 'monstrous' habit of shaving, citing classical and biblical authorities to show that to shave the beard is 'an Act not only of indecency, but of injustice, and ingratitude against God and Nature' (199–200). At the same time, his attack on the practice of shaving participates in contemporary anxieties about the relationship between fashion and identity, fearing that those who shave their beards are on a slippery slope of effeminate behaviour and may proceed to 'go apparelled like women', and perhaps go so far as to 'not only counterfeit their speech', but 'also sit down and spin' (199). The anxiety that clothing could somehow transform the wearer's sexual identity was hardly new. Such attacks were usually directed at the theatres, since male actors had to don women's clothing to assume female roles.⁵⁰ Others were concerned about the growing trend of women wearing men's attire. Writing against this practice, the Puritan Philip Stubbes argued that:

Our Apparell was giuen us as a signe distinctiue to discern betwixt sex and sex, & therefore one to weare the Apparell of another sex, is to participate with the same, and to adulterate the veritie of his owne kinde. Wherefore these Women may not improperly be called Hermaphroditi, that is, Monsters of bothe kindes, half women, half men.⁵¹

As the Puritans, religious zealots, and morally concerned citizens of England anguished over a fashion they believed to be unnatural, increased international trade with the old world and competition to discover and colonize new ones resulted in an improved awareness of other cultural practices. Following his extended attack on the practice of shaving, Bulwer proceeds to catalogue the fashions in facial hair

found in different cultures. These include the Tartars who ‘shave their upper Lips, and warre with the *Persians* for not doing so’ (195), through to the men in ‘the Kingdome of *Mancy* in great *India*’ who ‘have Beards as it were Cats’ (205). Facial hair operated as a sign of cultural difference between the Europeans themselves, with ‘the *Hungarians* [who] shave their Beards and leave nothing but the Mustachoes’ (198) and the Germans, who are ‘a little too indulgent’ with their beard growth, ‘insomuch as some of them have been seen to have had their Beards so long, that they would reach unto their feet’ (210).

Before its encounter with the New World, the European mind identified the Jew and the Muslim as the foremost cultural Other, both ‘widely imagined and graphically represented as being bearded’.⁵² Elliott Horowitz has argued that a radical shift took place during the age of discovery, as the beard, now fashionable, became instead aligned with a Christian Europe that faced a new cultural Other: the beardless inhabitants of the New World. According to Bulwer, Horowitz’s argument appears to be true: the ‘Naturall Inhabitants of *Virginia*’ wear ‘halfe their Beards shaven’ (201), while in ‘the Province of *Mexico* the men are Beardless’ (203), and those in ‘*Elizabeths* Island, toward the North of *Virginia*’ have ‘no Beards, but counterfeits’ (205).

Reports of bearded natives were not exclusively of men. ‘There is a Mountaine of *Ethiopia*’, writes Bulwer, ‘where women live with prolix beards’ (215–16). Not to be outdone, the women in ‘*Brasile*, *Caneda*, and *Nova Francia*’ are ‘said to have some kind of Beard under their Chins’ (216). Although Bulwer prefaces these reports with those of individual sightings of bearded women in Europe, and the explanation that women ‘through discontinuance of the Company of men, and defect of their Courses, have grown Bearded’, he maintains that ‘Woman by Nature is smooth and delicate’, and ‘if she have many haire she is a Monster’ (215).

What did this all mean to an audience watching *Macbeth* in Jacobean London? For some members of the audience, the spectacle of three bearded women may have fuelled anxieties about the relationship between costume and sexual identity. That male actors could present themselves so convincingly in female roles was threatening enough, since it raised the unnerving possibility that sexual identity might be merely a performance itself. To add costuming to the mix, as well as the beards—misplaced material signifiers of masculine identity—could only add to the possible anxiety and confusion. To borrow a phrase from David Scott Kastan, ‘the cultural anxiety about the fluidity of social role and identity found shrill voice’ in *Macbeth*’s bearded Sisters.⁵³

It is also possible that members of the audience were familiar with tales of women that grew beards in foreign lands, and that this informed their interpretation of the weyward Sisters. Perhaps others were familiar with reports of bearded women closer to home than the New World and the dark parts of Africa: Gerald of Wales

had, in his *Topography of Ireland*, described a woman ‘that had a beard down to her waist’, as well as a ‘crest from her neck down along her spine’. This same woman, ‘in spite of these two enormities was, nevertheless, not hermaphrodite’ and ‘was in other respects sufficiently feminine’.⁵⁴ On the Irish in general, Gerald wrote that ‘their external characteristics of beard and dress’, and their ‘internal cultivation of the mind’ are ‘so barbarous that they cannot be said to have any culture’ (101).

Descriptions of Irish barbarity extended to their language. As Patricia Palmer has shown, ‘Irish was consistently equated with bestial utterance’, and ‘with the metaphorically beastly dialect of the ungodly: of heathens, witches, papists’.⁵⁵ Early modern English writers, such as Barnabe Rich, made the explicit link between the Irish and witchcraft and heathenism, likening the mourning of Irish women to the ‘houling of dogges’, the ‘croaking of Rauens’ and ‘the shrieking of Owles’, a practice ‘fitter for Infidels and Barbarians’, than ‘to be in vse and custome among Christians’.⁵⁶

Christopher Highley has recently posited that the English perception of the Irish as barbaric, both in culture and language, extended to the Gaelic Scots:

The label of ‘barbarian’ that [King] James and like-minded Southerners routinely used for the Highlanders and Islanders of Northern Scotland had at least two etymologies in the Renaissance. In a fanciful folk etymology related by Gerald of Wales, ‘barbarian’ was derived from ‘barbaros’ or bearded, a meaning activated when Banquo exclaims upon first encountering the witches.⁵⁷

Tracing a more authentic etymology of the word ‘barbarian’ to ‘the Greek for a non-Greek speaker’, Highley argues that ‘*Macbeth* exploits a similar mingling of cultural categories when the witches speak a bestial language’ (62). As such, the witches can be interpreted as ‘conjuring up the archetypal figure of the barbarian’, one that is ‘menacingly instantiated in the Gaelic Highlander at the time of *Macbeth*’s early performances’ (63).

In light of English perceptions of the Irish, and the Gaelic language and reputation for barbarism they shared with the Highland Scots, coupled with the historical reports of bearded women hailing from the Celtic fringe, it is possible that members of the audience watching early performances of *Macbeth* may have interpreted the wayward Sisters, ‘stubbled and stammering’,⁵⁸ as originating from those uncivilized northern lands.

V. Aliens in their Midst

In his brilliant analysis of the monstrous races in medieval art and thought, John Friedman explains that, ‘even the most bizarre, however, were not supernatural or infernal creatures, but varieties of men, whose chief distinction from the men of Europe



Figure 7 (left): Woodcut from Hartmann Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum*. Nuremberg, 1493. Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Leatherby Libraries, Chapman University.



Figure 8 (right): Detail of the bearded woman.

was one of geography'.⁵⁹ For example, in his illustration of the 'Second Age' of man—a fallen and degenerate world before the Flood—Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum* (otherwise referred to as the Nuremberg Chronicle) includes woodcuts of a variety of grotesque figures, of which one is a bearded woman (**Figures 7 and 8**). We read on the recto side of the leaf (fol. XII) that these 'women with beards down to their chest but with bald heads, without hair' are from India.⁶⁰

As the reports by the Nuremberg Chronicle make clear, the distance from the Rhine to the Ganges was more than simply a matter of geographic space, but of moral and spiritual distance. The cartographic imagination therefore operated in two dimensions, simultaneously mapping the bodies of land and water, as well as the increasingly deformed bodies of those that approached the extremities. This partially explains why in the Renaissance—an age of increased international contact and trade, of discovery and colonial enterprise—books like the *Liber Chronicarum* and *The Voyages and Trauailes of Sir John Maundeuille* and their tales of strange and wondrous peoples in far-off lands were immensely popular. Indeed, the cartographic imagination was a powerful cultural phenomenon: as Friedman has suggested, even 'as geographical knowledge grew, and the existence of many of these races began to appear unlikely', perceptions of monstrous difference persisted and 'were shifted to regions less well known—the Far North and ultimately the New World', rather than being dismissed outright as fictions.⁶¹ In the early modern mind, like the medieval, longitude and latitude continued to measure both *distance* and *difference*,

with the relationship between the two in constant negotiation as new knowledge prompted reassessment.

An audience watching *Macbeth* during an early performance in Jacobean London brought with them more than the coins to cover the cost of admission to see the performance. They brought with them an infinite number of individual experiences, as well as a shared cultural milieu, both of which took part in the construction of meaning they would glean from the play. Some patrons would have brought with them specialized knowledge, such as the physicians, surgeons, and divines. Others may have had access to this knowledge, due to the popularity of such topics at the printing presses and bookstalls.

It is this constellation of the possible available knowledge that an audience could employ to interpret the early performances of *Macbeth* that this essay has thus far sought to reconstruct. Regardless of whether Shakespeare's deviation from Holinshed was deliberate or not, or even his own, the variety of possible audience responses to the bearded women onstage—responses linking them to other witches, amenorrhea and melancholia, the lives of saints, or barbarians from the Celtic fringes—are all significant. Each of these possible cognitive strands forms part of a rich tapestry of potential meanings that enrich our own understanding of *Macbeth* and its cultural moment. But the central question still remains: why are there bearded women in *Macbeth*?

According to Christopher Wortham, 'since the accession of the new monarch' the 'mood in England was one of lingering hope mingled with growing misgivings', with the English having 'to accommodate themselves to more changes than they found easy to bear'. This is evident in Shakespeare, where 'the brilliant light of English nationalism' that he had 'both celebrated and interrogated in his plays of English history in the 1590s now burned but dimly', as the new king, 'a Scot, who spoke in a strange and thick accent not of England but of Great Britain as his realm',⁶² seemed increasingly less likely to replace Elizabeth as 'an effective symbol of national aspirations'.⁶³ As R. Malcolm Smuts has pointed out, while 'the traditional portrait of a slovenly, homosexual king presiding over a debauched court is grossly exaggerated and one-sided', at the same time 'it does contain a significant core of truth':

The lapses of decorum within the court, the presence there of unpopular Scottish and homosexual favorites, the mounting costs of the royal household, and James's own surliness in public all tarnished the monarchy's prestige, inhibiting spontaneous public support.⁶⁴

Smuts is quick to note that 'these shortcomings did not mean that James was a bad king in any absolute sense', and that James 'had a number of political talents', but 'the ability to project a majestic and dignified image and to inspire reverence for himself

and his entourage was not among them' (28). His bizarre behavior and unpopular changes at court—putting the old, English courtiers out to pasture and replacing them with Scottish drinking buddies and homosexual flatterers—understandably resulted in a growing anti-Scottish sentiment amongst the English, and the perception that the Scots were aliens in their midst.⁶⁵ In the minds of many English, this sort of behaviour only highlighted the cultural distance between England and Scotland: it is little wonder, then, that James's repeated attempts between 1604 and 1607 to unify both realms under the banner of 'Great Britain' were rejected.⁶⁶

The importance of Jacobean court culture in understanding the complexities of *Macbeth* has long been recognized, although critics remain divided as to the precise nature of James's influence on the play.⁶⁷ For some, Shakespeare is seen as toeing the ideological line by engaging in topics close to his patron's heart: witchcraft, treason, the Stuart myth, and the divine right of kings.⁶⁸ Others assert more subversive readings, arguing that instead of promoting the Stuart ideology the play exposes it, stressing the unflattering picture painted by Shakespeare of a Scotland filled with blasted heaths, witches and spirits, barbaric savages, tyrants and traitors, and, to top it all off, cannibalistic horses that 'eate each other' (946; 2. 4. 18).⁶⁹ More recent studies adopt a more sensible approach, demonstrating that these issues are more problematic in *Macbeth*, and that to characterize the play as simply endorsing Stuart ideology on the one hand, or solely challenging it on the other, is reductive and ultimately a failure to acknowledge its complexities.⁷⁰ As Jean Howard suggests judiciously, 'the intertextual links between *Macbeth* and the more general 'matter of Scotland' are best understood as complex and associative, rather than direct and definite'.⁷¹

This tempered approach can be applied to the question of why there are bearded women in *Macbeth*. James was Shakespeare's patron—his troupe was not called the King's Men for nothing—and Shakespeare was certainly aware of James's interests in witchcraft and demonology, and as such it is easy to account for the presence of the bearded Sisters in the play. But Shakespeare did not only play for his royal patron, but to paying audiences of thousands, many of whom (as we have seen) were at the very least suspicious of the growing numbers of Scots in their midst and at court, not to mention the particularly unflattering individual at its centre. As Richard Helgerson has insightfully shown, English xenophobic attitudes rose during this period, due in large to the Elizabethan project of nationhood, which, in the course of defining what it meant to be 'English', demonized and alienated those who did not fit the paradigm.⁷² As noted by a number of critics, these prejudiced views of aliens and outsiders often found their expression in popular culture, and were prominent in the drama of the age.⁷³ With this in mind, it is possible to read the bearded women in *Macbeth* as participating in this wider movement of English self-fashioning and its strategies of cultural estrangement: the weyward Sisters, 'stubbled

and stammering',⁷⁴ would have not only been perceived as being 'Scottish', but quintessentially 'un-English'. Thus, while his patron was fervently seeking to erode the perceived distinctions between his Scottish and English subjects, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* seems only to highlight their differences.

As we have seen, whether on a male or female body the beard operates as a site of physiological, supernatural, social, and cultural difference. In the case of men, as brilliantly examined by Will Fisher and Mark Johnston, the beard was not simply an object of fashion but an important signifier in discourses of national, class, gender, and sexual identity. On women, the presence of a beard was perceived as an aberration—the result of physiological excess, divine or demonic intervention—or as an index of cultural difference from the viewer. Shakespeare's construction of the bearded Sisters in *Macbeth* engages with all of these various meanings. Like Macbeth's first words, describing the day as 'foule and faire' (138; 1. 3. 36), the bearded women are a contradiction: they 'looke not like th' Inhabitants o'th' Earth, / And yet are on't', it is unclear whether they 'Liue' or are 'aught / That man may question', and while they 'should be Women', they are bearded like men (140–45; 1. 3. 39–45). In the words of Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, their beards are the sign of the uncanny, associating 'sexual ambiguity with the dangers that lurk at the boundaries of the known, rationalized world of sexual difference and sexual exclusion constructed by patriarchal discourse'.⁷⁵ Their beards are also emblematic of their other-worldliness and supernatural powers, as the audience witnesses these bearded figures committing acts that were readily identifiable as witchcraft, acts that their new sovereign had recently reaffirmed as illegal by statute in 1604.⁷⁶ Finally, the bearded Sisters epitomize the sense of cultural difference that pervades the play, estranging the Scottish characters portrayed onstage from its (mostly) English audience. We have seen how a culture of ambivalence and unease characterized the early years of James's reign, as the English were confronted with the task of accommodating increasing numbers of Scots—peoples of a nation that many English were old enough to remember being at war with—as neighbours rather than as aliens. While it is unclear whether an audience would have interpreted the bearded women onstage as Scottish, or whether *Macbeth* was written to gratify or challenge a king, what is clear is the cultural meaning of the beard: difference.

Notes

- 1 The full inscription on the plinth reads: EN MAGNVM NATVRAE / MIRACVLVM / MAGDALENA VENTVRA EX / OPPIDO ACVMVULI APVD / SAMNITES VVLGO EL A / BRVZZO REGNI NEAPOLI / TANI ANNORVN 52 ET / QVOD INSOLENS EST CVM / ANNVM 37 AGERET COE / EXT VT POTIVS / ALICVIVS MAGISTRI

BARBATI / ESSE VIDEATVR QVAM MV / LIERIS QVAE TRES FILIOS / ANTE
 AMISERIT QVOS EX / VIRO SVO FELICI DE AMICI / QVEM ADESSE VIDES
 HA / BVERAT. / IOSEPHVS DE RIBERA HIS / PANVS CHRISTI CRVCE /
 INSIGNITVS SVI TEM- / PORIS ALTER APELLES / IVSSV FERDINANDI II /
 DVCIS III DE ALCALA / NEAPOLI PROREGIS AD / VIVVM MIRE DEPINXIT /
 XIIIJ KALEN. MART / ANNO MDCXXXI.

- 2 James Schiffer, 'Macbeth and the Bearded Women', in *Another Country: Feminist Perspectives on Renaissance Drama*, ed. Dorothea Kehler and Susan Baker (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1991), p. 206. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 3 Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 207. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 4 This is, of course, exactly what Lorraine Helms warns against as 'theatre history exceeds its brief if it tries to decide whether Forman (or any other spectator) saw what Banquo suggests he should have seen rather than what Forman himself describes', in 'The Weyward Sisters: Towards a Feminist Staging of *Macbeth*', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 8.30 (1992): 167–77, (169).
- 5 The original of Simon Forman's manuscript is held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (MS Ashmolean 208). The transcription supplied here is from Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: Records and Images* (London: Scholar Press, 1969), p. 7.
- 6 This is the argument made most recently by Gary Taylor, 'Shakespeare Plays on Renaissance Stages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Stage*, ed. Stanley Wells and Sarah Stanton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 18; and David Grote, *The Best Actors in the World: Shakespeare and His Acting Company* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 141.
- 7 Graham Holderness, "'To be Observed": Cue One *Macbeth*', in *Re-Visions of Shakespeare: Essays in Honor of Robert Ornstein*, ed. Evelyn Gajowski (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2004), pp. 169–75.
- 8 This has been asserted most recently by Stephen Orgel, 'Acting Scripts, Performing Texts', in *The Authentic Shakespeare, and Other Problems of the Early Modern Stage* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 33–34.
- 9 Raphael Holinshed, *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577; STC 13568), 243 (sig. D2^R). The woodcut also appears on this page.
- 10 Frederick Kiefer, *Shakespeare's Visual Theatre: Staging the Personified Characters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 111.
- 11 The uses of the prosthetic beard, as well as evidence of its popularity, are discussed in detail by William Fisher in his article, 'The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54.1 (2001): 155–87, esp. 163–65. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 12 *The Book of Sir Thomas More*, ed. W. W. Greg (London: Malone Society Reprints, 1911), p. 34.
- 13 I have been unable to locate a single reference to accused witches sporting beards in the witchcraft pamphlets and trial accounts printed during Shakespeare's lifetime. It is possible that such references exist in trial records that were not printed or made publicly available.

- 14 Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1869), p. 199. Twain is referring comically to the perception of Italian women as hirsute.
- 15 Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Honest Mans Fortune*, in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beavmont and Iohn Fletcher* (London, 1647; Wing B1581), p. 154 (sig. Tttt3^v).
- 16 For a detailed discussion of notions of monstrosity and wonder in the medieval and early modern periods, see: Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Kathryn M. Brammall, 'Monstrous Metamorphosis: Nature, Morality, and the Rhetoric of Monstrosity in Tudor England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 27.1 (1996): 3–21; and Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York: Zone, 1998).
- 17 Reginald Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584; STC 21864), 7 (sig. Ciiij^r).
- 18 Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London, 1590; STC 23081), sig. H4^v.
- 19 William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* (London, 1658; Wing R2097), pp. 13, 15.
- 20 Neil MacGregor, *Seeing Salvation: Images of Christ in Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 98.
- 21 For a detailed discussion of the origin and development of the Uncumber legend, see: David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 309–22.
- 22 Harry S. Lipscomb and Hebbel E. Hoff, 'Saint Uncumber or *La Vierge Barbue*', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 37 (1963): 523–27, (525). Important altars devoted to Saint Uncumber in England are found in Old St Paul's in London, and at Chew Stoke in Somerset. In John Heywood's earlier Tudor play, *The playe called the foure PP* (London, 1544; STC 13300), the character of the Palmer lists an altar devoted to the saint as one that he has visited on pilgrimage (sig. A1^v).
- 23 Thomas More, *A Dyaloge of Syr Thomas More* (London, 1529; STC 18084), fol. LX^v.
- 24 Jane T. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity and Society, ca. 500–1100* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 153–54.
- 25 The exact nature of the threat remains unclear. Some critics argue that the threat is sexual, in that the witch threatens to commit adultery with the sailor. Others suggest that the witch will harm the husband or the ship while in rat form.
- 26 John Bale, *A Comedy Concernynge Thre Lawes* (London, 1548; STC 1287), sig. B5^r.
- 27 John Banister, *The Historie of Man* (London, 1578; STC 1359), sig. B2^v.
- 28 Hippocrates, *Epidemics*, VI. 8. 32. The translation given is taken from the edition of *Epidemics II, IV–VII* by Wesley D. Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 289–91.
- 29 Juan Huarte, *Examen de Ingenios, The Examination of Mens Wits*. trans. Richard Carew (London, 1594; STC 13890), p. 271.
- 30 Tomasa Garzoni, *The Hospital of Incvrable Fooles* (London, 1600; STC 11634), sig. B2^v.

- 31 Antonio de Torquemada, *The Spanish Mandeuile of Miracles* (London, 1600; STC 24135), sig. K2^R.
- 32 Torquemada, sig. K2^V.
- 33 Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes*, trans. John Florio (London, 1603; STC 18041), pp. 40–41. For an excellent examination of Montaigne’s account, see Patricia Parker, ‘Gender Ideology, Gender Change: The Case of Marie Germain’, *Critical Inquiry*, 19.2 (1993): 337–64.
- 34 Francesco Maria Guazzo, *Compendium Maleficarum* (Milan, 1608), Book I, Chap. XVII. The translation is from the Montague Summers edition, translated by E. A. Ashwin (London: John Rodker, 1929), p. 57. Guazzo includes a number of accounts of women who have become men, as indicated by genital appearance or the growth of a beard. It should be noted that Guazzo and other continental demonologists differed in their opinion on the metamorphosis of human bodies into animals.
- 35 Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 182–83.
- 36 Thomas Hill, *The Contemplation of Mankinde* (London, 1571; STC 13482), sig. 146^V–147^R.
- 37 Anglicus Bartholomaeus, *Batmann vppon Bartholome his book De proprietatibus rerum* (London, 1582; STC 1538), fol. 43^R. The same argument occurs in Hill, sig. 147^{R-V}. Hill goes on to argue that while children are also known to be hot and moist, they do not produce beards because ‘the smokie superflouosnesse, which is the especiall matter of the heares ... doth in them passe, and serue to their increase, and nourishment’ (sig. 149^R).
- 38 Bartholomaeus, fol. 43^R. See also Bartolommeo della Rocca (Coccles), *A Briefe and Most Pleasaunt Epitomye of the Whole Art of Physiognomie* (London, 1556; STC 5468), sig. Dii^R; and John Sadler, *The Sicke Womans Priuate Looking-Glasse* (London, 1636; STC 21544), 16–17.
- 39 Scot, p. 54 (sig. F3^V).
- 40 Pierre Le Loyer, *A Treatise of Specters or Straunge Sights, Visions and Apparitions*, trans. Zachary Jones (London, 1605; STC 15448), fol. 110^{R-V}.
- 41 Claire Bartram, ‘Melancholic Imaginations’: Witchcraft and the Politics of Melancholia in Elizabethan Kent’, *Journal of European Studies*, 33.3 (2003): 203–11, 203.
- 42 For a more detailed discussion, see Jenijoy La Belle, ‘A Strange Infirmity’: Lady Macbeth’s Amenorrhœa’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31.3 (1980): 381–86.
- 43 Thomas W. Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 44 Mark A. Johnston, ‘Playing with the Beard: Courtly and Commercial Economies in Richard Edwards’s *Damon and Pithias* and John Lyly’s *Midas*’, *ELH*, 72 (2005): 79–103, (79).
- 45 Piero Valeriano, *Pro sacerdotum barbibus* (London, 1553; STC 19902), sig. A7^{R-V}.
- 46 Thomas Hall, *Comarum Akosmia, The Loathsomnesse of Longe Haare* (London, 1653; Wing H429), p. 48.
- 47 Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *The Glory of Women, or A Looking-Glasse for Ladies*, trans. Hugh Crompton (London, 1652; Wing A787), p. 14.
- 48 *Le Prince d’Amour; or The Prince of Love* (London, 1660; Wing R2189), p. 126.

- 49 John Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transform'd, Or, The Artificial Changeling* (London, 1653; Wing B5461), p. 198. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 50 For a brilliant discussion of the fear of effeminization that appears in anti-theatrical tracts, see: Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-Theatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- 51 Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses* (London, 1583; STC 23376), sig. F5^v.
- 52 Elliott Horowitz, 'The New World and the Changing Face of Europe', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 28.4 (1997): 1181–201, 1185. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 53 David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 154.
- 54 Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John J. O'Meara (New York: Penguin, 1982), pp. 72–73. Gerald also mentions another woman with half a beard who was a hermaphrodite. Further citations are taken from this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.
- 55 Patricia Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 92.
- 56 Barnabe Rich, *The Irish Hubbub, or The English Hue and Crie* (London, 1617; STC 20989), p. 4 (sig. B2^v).
- 57 Christopher Highley, 'The Place of Scots in the Scottish Play: *Macbeth* and the Politics of Language', in *Shakespeare and Scotland*, ed. Willy Maley and Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 62. Further citations are given parenthetically in the text.
- 58 Highley, p. 62.
- 59 John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 1.
- 60 Hartmann Schedel, *Liber Chronicarum* (Nuremberg, 1493), fol. XII^r. The Latin reads 'Item mulieres cum usque ad pectus sed capite plano sine crinibus'. Schedel's description is derived from the *Gesta Romanorum*, a medieval collection of anecdotes and commonplaces, which includes in its chapter 'De hominibus diversarum formarum', in turn based on Pliny and Augustine, the text that Schedel has copied almost verbatim: 'Item mulieres cum barbibus usque ad pectus sed capite plano'.
- 61 Friedman, p. 1.
- 62 Christopher Wortham, 'Disorientation: The Case of *Othello*', in *The Touch of the Real: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Philippa Kelly (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 2002), pp. 177–201, p. 192.
- 63 R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), p. 29.
- 64 Smuts, p. 28. For a more detailed discussion of James, his English reception, and his treatment by historians, see: Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I: Two Kings or One?' *History*, 68 (1983): 187–209; and Pauline Croft, 'The Reign of James VI and I: The Birth of Britain', *History Compass*, 1 (2003): BR 046, 1–13.

- 65 For a balanced discussion of contemporary representations of Scotland in early Stuart England, see William C. Carroll, 'The Cultural Construction of Scotland', in *Macbeth: Texts and Contexts* (New York: Bedford/St Martin's, 1999), pp. 271–99.
- 66 For a more detailed discussion of James's project of unification, and the literary and cultural responses to it, see: Joseph B. Rochon, *The King of Hearts: James VI and I, the 'Union of Love' and Images of Britain at the Anglo-Scottish Court, 1603–1608* (Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University, Ontario, 1999); and Sandra Bell, "'No Scot, No English Now': Literary and Cultural Responses to James VI and I's Policies on Union", *Renaissance Forum*, 7.1 (2004): 1–13.
- 67 On the wider question of James's influence on Shakespeare drama, including *Macbeth*, see: Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne and their Contemporaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Stephen Orgel, 'Making Greatness Familiar', in *Pageantry in the Shakespearean Theater*, ed. David M. Bergeron (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), pp. 19–25; Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986); and Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theater: The Stuart Years* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).
- 68 Representative studies of this kind include: Henry N. Paul, *The Royal Play of Macbeth* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); Gary Wills, *Witches & Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Alvin Kernan, *Shakespeare, the King's Playwright* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); and Tristan Marshall, *Theatre and Empire: Great Britain on the London Stages under James VI and I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 61–65.
- 69 Representative readings of this kind include: Alan Sinfield, 'Macbeth: History, Ideology, and Intellectuals', *Critical Quarterly*, 28 (1986): 63–77; Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); David Norbrook, 'Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography', in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 78–116; and Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd ed (New York: Palgrave, 2002), esp. pp. 89–95.
- 70 Representative studies include: Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. pp. 111–52; David Scott Kastan, 'Is There a Class in This (Shakespearean) Text?', in *Shakespeare After Theory*; Robin Headlam Wells, "'Arms and the Man": *Macbeth*', in *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Andrew Hadfield, 'Malcolm in the Middle: James VI and I, George Buchanan and the Divine Right of Kings', in *Shakespeare, Spenser and the Matter of Britain* (New York: Palgrave, 2004).
- 71 Jean E. Howard, 'Shakespeare, Geography, and the Work of Genre on the Early Modern Stage', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 64.3 (2003): 299–322, 319.
- 72 Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here Amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

- 73 Of particular note is: A. J. Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992).
- 74 Highley, p. 62.
- 75 Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 46.
- 76 1 Jac. I, c. 12 (1604), 'An acte against Coniuration Witchcrafte and dealing with evill and wicked Spirits'. The text is reproduced in *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials*, ed. C. L'Estrange Ewen (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929), pp. 19–21.