

Macduff's Son and the Queer Temporality of *Macbeth*

AMANDA ZOCH

Early modern children are largely unknowable. They leave scant archival evidence and, when brought to life by early modern playwrights, child characters are often seen rather than heard. For these reasons, studies of early modern children have been primarily historical and recuperative, either chronicling accounts of childhood or giving voice to the boy actors in children's and professional acting companies.¹ Joseph Campana, however, has recently advocated a different approach, one that considers early modern children as more than historical or affective subjects in need of recovery.² His work on Shakespeare's children critiques the sentimentality that pervades early modern child studies, and he instead considers child characters as "literary test cases of what the idea of the child could and could not accomplish."³ Heeding Campana's call to action, I turn to *Macbeth*—a play whose children many scholars, including Campana, have discussed—in order to complicate one of Shakespeare's most sentimentalized minor characters: Macduff's son. For Campana, the children in *Macbeth*, *Richard II*, and *Henry VI* are "exemplary broken timepieces whose fractures reveal crises in the concept of sovereignty and innovations in thinking about the political bodies of children."⁴ While he offers a compelling argument for the general value of Shakespeare's child characters, I find that an independent consideration of young Macduff remains necessary to ascertain this particular character's dramatic function in *Macbeth*. To that end, this article explores the historical and narrative characterization of Macduff's son, a pivotal figure whose childish innocence and adult

Amanda Zoch is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her dissertation investigates the narrative performance and erasure of pregnancy in early modern drama and women's writing.

understanding reveal a queer indeterminacy that troubles the presumed symbolic relationship between children and futurity.

Even the most cursory exposure to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* reveals the play as utterly preoccupied with children. They proliferate throughout the text, signifying innocence and its unjust violation at the hands of the Macbeths, promising generational security for fathers' and kings' legacies, and serving as motives, with the absence of children magnifying Macbeth's desire for kingship and immortality. In fact, Margaret Omberg notes that Shakespeare deviates from his source material in Raphael Holinshed's histories to ensure that most male characters form pairs of fathers and sons: King Duncan and his sons, Malcolm and Donalbain; Macduff and Macduff's son; Banquo and Fleance; and Siward and Young Siward.⁵ In particular, Shakespeare's creation of Siward's and Macduff's sons underscores the play's obsession with young male heirs.

Critics, too, are preoccupied with the play's fixation on real and imagined progeny, resulting in a formidable amount of scholarship on the children in *Macbeth*. Much of that work considers whether or not the Macbeths had children. Decades ago, Cleanth Brooks and L. C. Knights dismissed this query as an overly literal engagement with the text, yet the question of the Macbeths' children—as well as its merit as a question—continued to kindle debates for years.⁶ While scholarship has generally moved away from direct involvement in this once-heated topic, the critical centrality of the Macbeths' apparent childlessness often eclipses the significance of the play's other, more corporeal children. While young Macduff, for instance, plays an integral role in the plot—his death propels Macduff's victorious retaliation—he receives only marginal attention from scholars. Most references to Macduff's son highlight his innocence and unjust slaughter merely to confirm Macbeth's tyranny, a selective approach suggestive of the sentimental attitude against which Campana warns. Such an approach limits our perception of young Macduff's role in *Macbeth*. When freed from a sentimental reading, however, Macduff's son provides a valuable entry into another dynamic area of scholarly interest: time and the tension between the play's linear and queer temporalities.⁷

In his oscillation between childish and adult behavior, young Macduff bridges two prevailing lines of inquiry into *Macbeth*: the symbolic role of children and the asynchronous nature of time. This fluctuation renders him an ambiguous child, an unstable signifier of futurity. Therefore, I argue that young Macduff disrupts the play's linear temporality by failing to align with the futurity

he, as a child, appears to symbolize. In turn, the son's abbreviated life parallels Macbeth's fraught relation to time, revealing the overlooked structural and thematic significance of Macduff's son.

To lay the groundwork for this argument, I first address how scholars have traditionally understood young Macduff and then use both the character's performance history and the history of early modern childhood to complicate sentimental interpretations. I consider the character's historical reception in relation to Kathryn Bond Stockton and Anna Maria Jones's work on queer children, contextualizing Macduff's son as a particular kind of queer child, both unknown and knowing. I juxtapose that state with the future-orientation of the Macbeths' nonexistent, yet hoped for, children and Banquo's escaped son, Fleance. Such a contrast reveals the power of young Macduff's misrecognized futurity: he symbolizes generational succession while simultaneously living out Lee Edelman's call for queer subjects to embrace "no future." Accordingly, I will conclude this article by considering how Edelman's antirelational approach complicates Macbeth's perceived relationship to time, arguing that young Macduff functions as a harbinger of the play's queer temporality and as a reflection of Macbeth's doomed futurity.

Before discussing Macduff's son as a queer child, I must first explain this article's use of "queer" as both a theoretical approach and an adjective. While queer theory's relevance to prequeer texts remains heavily debated, I believe this article offers a productive pairing for both *Macbeth* and the field of queer studies.⁸ Although I resist the more restrictive historicist definitions advocated by some scholars, I do attend to those historical specificities whose absence would obscure the context of a text's creation.⁹ Thus, I use queer unhistorically, but I also incorporate necessary historicist attention to early modern attitudes toward children and generational succession. Moreover, I am mindful of Will Stockton's caution against "the transformation of queerness into an honorific trope of the abnormal, obscure, strange, or unintelligible."¹⁰ For Will Stockton, defining queer does not normalize the term, and therefore I must clarify my use of this evocative word.¹¹ I use queer in a conceptually adjectival form, a descriptor for desire, relations, temporality, etc. Queer in its noun form—whereby it labels an identity—obstructs many productive readings of early modern texts because the noun signifies a historical specificity unavailable to this time period. Therefore, in this article, queer is an adjective that describes the early modern period's non-normative behaviors, desires, temporalities, and spaces as they

intersect with sexuality and reproduction. I situate Macduff's son as a queer child because he resists clear alignment with reproductive futurity, not because he is a same-sex desiring child.¹² I also employ other anachronistic terms from contemporary queer studies—in particular, futurity and heteronormativity—because these terms offer a lexical shorthand for early modern culture's patriarchal organization as well as its emphasis on generational succession—issues of supreme importance for understanding *Macbeth* and young Macduff.

BETWEEN INNOCENT AND KNOWING: MACDUFF'S SON AS QUEER CHILD

When literary scholars discuss Macduff's son, they often do so within larger arguments about Macbeth's cruelty. The son's murder, then, becomes either collateral damage in Macbeth's war on time or a parallel to Herod's slaughter of the innocents.¹³ Catherine Belsey claims that young Macduff, as well as Shakespeare's other victimized children, offer "a screen on which butchery is projected and made visible."¹⁴ On one hand, this interpretation emphasizes the violence of young Macduff's death, presenting it as visual evidence of Macbeth's brutality. On the other hand, viewing Macduff's son as a blank slate upon which the violence of adults can be wrought mistakenly empties the character of all possible agency. Readings that consider young Macduff only as a victim of adult violence oversimplify his character by omitting his vital connection to time.

Young Macduff's complexity emerges with more clarity when observed through the performance history of *Macbeth*, particularly the Restoration and Victorian periods' fraught relationship to the child character. According to Ann Blake, early modern directors and editors took issue with the son's "witty prattle" and cut his role from the play. A 1674 director found no merit in young Macduff's only scene and removed it from his production, while the 1744 editor of the Bell edition dismissed the scene for "trifling, superfluous dialogue" inappropriate for the play's pathos.¹⁵ In 1847, Samuel Phelps attempted to restore the son to the stage, but, as Carol Chillington Rutter notes, spectators found his death "too painful to watch," so the role was excised again.¹⁶ After the Restoration, young Macduff's murder was not staged professionally until 1909.¹⁷ In Katie Knowles's cultural history of Shakespeare's boy characters, she suggests that the reason for young Macduff's absence from the Restoration and Victorian

stages was his “jarring inconsistency of tone.”¹⁸ Young Macduff, she argues, becomes an “oxymoron in action”: both the ultimate victim, and the catalyst for victory.¹⁹ This contradiction occurs because Macduff’s son exhibits agency despite his naïveté. Thus, unlike some of Shakespeare’s other children who remained appealing across centuries, Macduff’s son resists characterization as a passive victim of violence. Moreover, despite the twentieth and twenty-first centuries’ increased tolerance for young Macduff’s “jarring inconsistency of tone,” the character persists in creating discomfort. Rutter, in an article examining post-1980 British productions of *Macbeth*, argues that the play’s treatment of children engages contemporary culture’s deep anxiety about “childness,” a fear that children are both endangered and dangerous.²⁰ *Macbeth* views young Macduff, however erroneously, as a threat, and this perspective tinges the audience’s perception; though murdered, the child is somehow not quite victim enough.

While much of young Macduff’s complexity becomes visible in contrast to specific historical conditions, we must also consider the character within the context of early modern childhood. As noted at the beginning of this article, our distance from early modernity creates an unstable environment for the analysis of children. Working with exceedingly limited evidence, historians continue to disagree over whether or not early modern childhood was viewed as ontologically distinct from adulthood and the extent to which the cultural and emotional attitudes necessary for managing high infant mortality rates affected adults’ perception of their progeny.²¹ Nonetheless, Shakespeare’s children—though beholden to no singular theory of childhood or parent-child interactions—do offer fairly coherent representations of childhood as a state separate from adulthood and one wherein children are recipients of parental affections. Analyzing the rites of passage in Shakespeare’s plays, Marjorie Garber claims that early modern children remained unlike adults until individuated by “a movement away from group identification either with peers or with a nuclear family unity.”²² Moreover, in *Childhood in Shakespeare’s Plays*, Morriss Henry Partee argues that Shakespeare’s “presentation of children with adults on the stage suggests his recognition that although the priorities of a patriarchal society made childhood a difficult time, not all parents were so oblivious to children as to regard them as ‘small adults.’”²³ Therefore, despite what some historians might claim about the general plight of early modern children, Shakespeare’s representations are widely recognizable as children.

Yet, just as performance historians acknowledge young Macduff's divisive reception, Garber notes an unsettling quality to Shakespeare's child characters: "their disquieting adulthood strikes the audience with its oddness, and we are relieved when these terrible infants leave the stage."²⁴ Shakespeare's children may invite parental affection and, its corollary, mourning—as we see with Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale* and Arthur in *King John*—but they can also exhibit a premature adulthood that discomfits viewers. For example, in one of the most extensive considerations of Macduff's son, Partee claims that the child unnerves his mother with his "mature generalization[s]" and "sophistication and insight." Although Lady Macduff dismisses his remarks, young Macduff's rationalization of life without a father and his suggestion that his mother has found a replacement husband represent a pragmatic attitude at odds with the news of his father's supposed death.²⁵ Thus, Garber, Partee, and performance historians complicate the son's perceived innocence, and I build off their work by arguing that young Macduff's deviation from innocence also marks a movement away from generational, future-oriented time.

Macduff's son vacillates between expected innocence and a disturbing adulthood; he is at once knowing and unknowing, known and unknown—paradoxes that are characteristic, I argue, of a queer child. Although queer theory's turn to the child has come under some justifiable fire for contributing to the overdetermination of a child's sexual identity, we can gain much by pairing this discourse with early modern children, especially when these subjects are freed from heteronormative constraints.²⁶ In this regard, Kathryn Bond Stockton's expansive work on the various modes of childhood queerness steps beyond what Kenneth Kidd observes as queer theory's two dominant priorities when investigating the child: "queering the child, or exposing the child's latent queerness" and "underscoring the Child's normative power."²⁷ In *The Queer Child*, Kathryn Bond Stockton argues that a child's queerness is not necessarily sexual; rather, the child may be "queered by innocence."²⁸ Because childhood is temporally distant from the adults who define it, children are "made strange (though appealing) to us by [their] all-important 'innocence.' This is a form of normative strangeness ... From the standpoint of adults, innocence is alien, since it is 'lost' to the very adults who assign it to children."²⁹ Thus, the obscured and temporary space of childhood contains an inherent queerness.

Although Kathryn Bond Stockton regards the child queered by innocence as a twentieth-century development, *Macbeth* dem-

onstrates that the obscuring effects of innocence are not limited to modern children, as young Macduff's dialogue with his mother makes evident. After learning that Macduff may have betrayed his country and abandoned his family, Lady Macduff tells her son, "Sirrah, your father's dead," a lie meant to protect young Macduff from his father's shame.³⁰ Her actions recall the "'coddling' attitude" described by historian Philippe Ariès in which early modern parents, particularly mothers, care for and protect their children.³¹ If she regarded her son as but a small adult, then she would be less inclined to protect him from this knowledge. Furthermore, when Lady Macduff cannot read her son's silence, she presses the point: "How wilt thou do for a father?" (IV.ii.38). Trying to prompt a response, she further emphasizes her child's helplessness, suggesting that young Macduff needs a father since he is still too young to ascend to head of the family.

Although treated by his mother as an innocent, some of young Macduff's actions tell a different story. His performance history shows that he has the uncanny ability to unsettle audiences through a disjointed juxtaposition of adult ability and childlike innocence. Rather than credit this unease to young Macduff's precocity, a state ascribed to him by Campana and Blake, I am instead interested in the queer temporality embedded in this contrast of adult and child. In a recent article, Anna Maria Jones conceptualizes the "*knowing-innocent child*," which she defines as "a being who can, impossibly, embody the potentiality of a future, not-yet-realized social order and also give its full consent to that suppositious future, maintaining both childish purity (ignorance) and mature selfhood (knowingness)."³² Employing Kathryn Bond Stockton's concept of a child queered by innocence, Jones expands the idea to incorporate the queer child's frequent and uncanny adultness, proposing a tension between "the innocent child-as-victim and the knowing child-as-agent."³³ For Jones, knowing differs from precocity because knowing encompasses adult agency, while precocity most commonly emerges as imitative wit.³⁴ The knowing-innocent child offers a fruitful framework for understanding Macduff's son: as both victim and agent, he embodies the innocence of present childhood and the knowingness of adulthood. Rather than symbolize a future he will grow to achieve, this knowing-innocent child asynchronously embodies the future in the present.

Young Macduff reveals himself to be much more than a mere prattler or innocent babe when Lady Macduff, upon learning that her husband has fled to Scotland, initiates a brief conversa-

tion with her son. When Lady Macduff lies about her husband's death, the son responds not with grief or foolish nonsense, but with an adult-like practicality surprising for a child. Macduff's son returns, "If he were dead, you'd weep for him; if you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father" (IV.ii.58–9).³⁵ The son's utilitarian approach acknowledges that he needs a father, but he then suggests that if his father is dead, his mother does not grieve because she has already found a replacement for Macduff. Lady Macduff laughs at this absurd yet practical logic, recalling the scene from *The Winter's Tale* where Mamillius flirts with his mother's attendants:

Your brows are blacker; yet black brows, they say,
Become some women best, so that there be not
Too much hair there, but in a semicircle
Or a half moon made with a pen.³⁶

Mamillius's words parrot adult discussions of beauty despite him lacking full understanding of his interlocutors' teasing remarks. However, young Macduff's response—though also arguably precocious—reveals clear insight into his mother's words; he suspects that what she says is not true, and he reacts accordingly.³⁷ Although he acts like an adult in this moment, he of course has the physicality of a child, and this contrast establishes temporal dissonance between his present and future states, troubling the son's alignment with futurity and priming the audience for the larger issue of *Macbeth*'s untenable relationship to—and against—time.

As if to remind the audience of young Macduff's ultimate vulnerability, his adult insight never appears without some contrasting moment of childish ignorance. When the son intuits from his mother's odd behavior that his father remains alive, he asks, "Was my father a traitor, mother?" (IV.ii.44). As with young Macduff's assessment of his mother, this question reveals a complex awareness of the situation; if his mother tells him that his father is dead, then she must mean to spare him from worse news, such as familial or national betrayal. However, when Lady Macduff responds with the affirmative, admitting Macduff is a traitor (or so she thinks), the son asks, "What is a traitor?" (IV.ii.46). Asking for the definition of a "traitor" reminds the audience that this character is not a boy about to be a man, but simply a boy, one who knows how to use words—how, sometimes, to act like an adult—but not always what those words mean. He lacks the worldly, adult knowledge that a traitor is, as Lady Macduff help-

fully supplies, “one that swears and lies” (IV.ii.47). This oscillation between adult agency and childish helplessness queers young Macduff’s body and enables a slippage between innocent and knowing, child and adult, and future and present. The resulting dissonance only increases when young Macduff dies at the end of the scene, embodying both the child he is and the adult he might have been. This final oxymoronic status highlights Macbeth’s misguided efforts to secure a future in the present and heralds the play’s shift into a queer temporality.

Thus, I argue that the knowing-innocent character of Macduff’s son disrupts not only a single scene, but also the play’s dominant linear temporality. For example, after the son’s murder, Macduff explicitly speaks of him but once, questioning the poor messenger, “My children too? / ... What, all my pretty chickens and their dam / At one fell swoop?” (IV.iii.212 and 221–2). Yet Macduff, grieving “as a man,” vows, “Front to front / Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself! / Within my sword’s length set him!” (IV.iii.225 and 236–8). Macduff mourns his son, a “pretty chicken[]” taken too soon, but the son’s death also propels Macduff’s murder of Macbeth. This act is Macduff’s revenge upon Macbeth for killing his family and ending his legacy. Killing Scotland’s king, however, disrupts generational time; regicide violently interrupts the line of succession and implicitly undermines the futurity Macduff seeks to avenge. Such long-term temporal effects signal a departure from generational time and show that mistaking young Macduff’s innocence for an alignment with futurity (a sentimental approach) would be to overlook the character’s larger significance within *Macbeth*.

BETWEEN PRESENT AND FUTURE: QUEER TEMPORALITY IN *MACBETH*

As a knowing-innocent child, Macduff’s son does not signify the proper, future-oriented potential of a child. I do not intend a casual mapping of modern notions of reproductive futurity and its emphasis on the potentiality of children onto the early modern period. However, the antecedents of these ideas are at work in early modern England. Generational time, in particular, exerts a powerful force on the play and its titular character. Jack (pub. as Judith) Halberstam defines this temporal mode as a subdivision of heteronormative time, “within which values, wealth, goods, and morals are passed through family ties from one generation to the next.”³⁸ Although the actions establishing generational time

as normative occur in the present, they are done for the sake of the future, "glanc[ing]," Halberstam clarifies, "ahead to connect the family to the future of both familial and national stability."³⁹ The early modern period's high infant and child mortality rates created a significant, practical need for ensuring a lineal future, suggesting an early, perhaps less overtly sentimental, form of reproductive futurity at work in the period. Furthermore, children who survived until early adolescence, as Macduff's son is typically portrayed, bore more of the symbolic weight of futurity because they had already outlived so many of their siblings and peers.⁴⁰ Macbeth is complicit in these beliefs when he muses to Banquo, "Do not you hope your children shall be kings, / When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me / Promised no less to them?" (I.iv.120–2). Macbeth desires what the witches have prophesied, and his disbelief at Banquo's skeptical reaction reveals his own impractical desire for a legacy despite his childlessness.

In addition to Macbeth's apparent desire for a legacy, this moment also hints at his eventual willingness to wage war against time to guarantee that his nonexistent children, rather than Banquo's corporeal progeny, "shall be kings." Rather than acknowledge the truth of the witches' first two prophecies—that he is Thane of Glamis and will become Thane of Cawdor—as a happy coincidence, Macbeth ponders the last one foretelling his ascension to king of Scotland. He resolves to trust fate: "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me" (I.iv.147). His resolve is short-lived, however, when just a few lines later, Macbeth whispers to Banquo, "Think upon what hath chanced, and at more time, / The interim having weighed it, let us speak / Our free hearts each to other" (I.iv.157–9). Despite an initial effort to leave his fortune to fate, Macbeth cannot relinquish the possibility of becoming king, of immortality, which inspires his resolution to take action.

In making himself king, the normative progression of time becomes Macbeth's enemy. With his wife's aid he attains the crown, yet he cannot achieve immortality through generational succession. This failure proceeds not from sterility or infant mortality, common reasons for childlessness. Rather, Macbeth simply runs out of time to acquire heirs, and the clock begins winding down when he "mock[s] the time" as he prepares to murder King Duncan (I.vii.81). According to Donald W. Foster, Macbeth's regicide and, later, outsourced slaughtering of children, reveal a "revenge on *time itself*," an interruption within the correct temporal progression.⁴¹ In this sense, generational time presents the primary

obstacle to Macbeth's desires; just as he murders sleep, Macbeth also "doth murder time," as William Blissett so pithily puts it.⁴²

Macbeth's antagonism toward time leads him to seek control over it. Luisa Guj claims that Macbeth attempts to usurp God by becoming the arbiter of his own fate.⁴³ Indeed, Macbeth tells his fellow nobles, "Let every man be master of his time" (III.i.42). Macbeth means that Banquo has every right to leave before the banquet, but these words also imply a desire for mastery over time, a desire his actions make apparent—especially his failure to trust passively the witches' prophecies. As Julia MacDonald claims, Macbeth chooses asynchrony in his attempts to master his own time. MacDonald argues for a "demonic" temporality in *Macbeth*, a temporality created by Macbeth's murder of Duncan, a murder of "a gracious time."⁴⁴ With this act, Macbeth rejects the normative temporality Duncan symbolizes and takes an asynchronous, rather than lineal, path to kingship. For MacDonald, asynchrony means being out of time, even being "in hell."⁴⁵ Although I situate Macbeth's existence at odds with time, rather than completely out of it, this asynchrony signals the connection between this play and queer theory, a link Heather Love has also observed.⁴⁶ Thus, indebted to Guj's and MacDonald's readings of Macbeth's intentionality, I argue that his conscious efforts to maintain generational time establish a queer temporality within which Macbeth's seemingly conventional desires exist.

The emergence of the play's queer temporality, then, occurs in contrast to normative generational time's privileging of children, futurity, and lineage. Queer temporalities can take various forms, but in contrast to heteronormativity's grip on the future, many emerge as latent turns toward the past or radical reimaginations of the future.⁴⁷ Lee Edelman, however, theorizes a fundamentally different form of queer temporality in *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Rather than engaging with a pull from the past or forging a new queer future, Edelman's version of queer temporality demands a total exit from the domains of heteronormativity. His polemic calls for queer subjects to embrace the "no future" of his title by refraining from all behavior that reinforces heteronormativity and normalizes queerness. For Edelman, then, the Child stands for all that is not queer, the symbolic totem that "remains the perpetual horizon of every acknowledged politics, the fantasmatic beneficiary of every political intervention."⁴⁸ The Child symbolizes the future, thus motivating and also threatening Macbeth. From this perspective, children—by virtue of their symbolic force as Children—may seem innately opposed to queer-

ness.⁴⁹ However, Macduff's son resists a straightforward reading of Edelman's argument. Young Macduff symbolizes the Child while also embodying, albeit unconsciously, Edelman's call for queer subjects to reject "the Child ... as site of a projective identification with an always impossible future" and instead "delight[] in ... mortality."⁵⁰ I turn to Edelman's not uncontroversial work to explore this strange intersection of antirelational queer theory and childhood in order to question prevailing notions of the Child and further explore the queerness of Macduff's son.

Young Macduff's rejection of futurity is most evident in his embrace of his own murder, an almost literal rendering of Edelman's call for "no future." As the murderers sent by Macbeth close in around Macduff's family, the son boldly confronts his attackers. When one of the murderers calls Macduff a traitor, the son responds with fervent language: "Thou liest, thou shag-haired villain!" (IV.ii.79). With this final threat, Macduff's son strikes at the murderer with the only strength his young body possesses, his verbal and physical agency. Acting on his own accord and empowered by his own words, he runs headfirst into death, an unthinking rejection of futurity that undermines the son's symbolic role as a Child and stands as a powerful moment in a play obsessed with children and generational time. The son's actions subvert futurity in two ways, a paradoxical effect befitting young Macduff's contradictory presence as a knowing-innocent child. First, in the face of impending murder, Macduff's son does not plead for his life as might be expected of a child. Rather, he becomes a child-as-agent and acts in direct opposition to futurity by running toward his much stronger attacker. Yet, in confronting the murderer, however unconvincingly, like a man—like his future adult self, like his father even—the son fails. He cannot harness the abilities of adulthood because, as this scene reveals, he will never be an adult. This knowing-innocent child will never grow into the adult his agency foretells, thereby cementing this character within the confines of a queer indeterminacy.

In addition to preserving young Macduff as a queer child, the character's death also marks a powerful shift in the temporality of *Macbeth*, serving as a transition from a normative, future-oriented temporality to a queer one. First, young Macduff has no reason to die. Unlike Fleance, Banquo's son and the promised heir to Scotland's crown, Macduff's son poses no logical threat to Macbeth's kingship. By Macbeth's reasoning, Fleance should die; his existence obstructs Macbeth's immortal desires.⁵¹ Yet he escapes Macbeth's trap and lives, while Macduff's son perishes by Mac-

beth's orders shortly thereafter. While Fleance's survival could be seen as a triumph of futurity because he, unlike young Macduff, lives to have a future, Fleance nevertheless exits the world of *Macbeth*. Macduff's son remains present in the text even after his death; we see his lingering effects in Macduff's violent grief and, as I will show, in Macbeth's most famous moment of introspection. Thus, despite the Child's ostensible perpetuation through Fleance, the play remains focused on the failed futurity of young Macduff. Kristen Poole notes that it is Fleance who first observes the oncoming distortion of time ("The moon is down; I have not heard the clock"), but such a queer, futureless temporality does not dominate the play until the unwarranted death of Macduff's son (II.i.2).⁵² Young Macduff, therefore, becomes a harbinger of the play's queer temporality, embodying—paradoxically—Edelman's call for a rejection of the heteronormative, generational mandate for a sustainable future.⁵³ After the son's death, the play abandons its future-oriented focus on Macbeth's rising fortunes and enters into the queer temporality of Edelman's "no future," or—to paraphrase Macbeth's tragic, soliloquized recognition—"no tomorrow" (V.v.19).

Standing in stark contrast to the doomed futurity of Macduff's son and the play's eventual temporal progression, *Macbeth* begins with a clear focus on the Macbeths' future aspirations. The couple appears childless, and a brief consideration of the absent progeny to whom Lady Macbeth claims to have "given suck" highlights the Macbeths' ravenous desire for futurity (I.vii.54). Although debates continue regarding whether or not the Macbeths had children, have children, or speak only hopefully, the fact remains that children—and their symbolic futurity—motivate Macbeth's actions. As suggested by his early lines to Banquo, "Do not you hope your children shall be kings" (I.iv.120), Macbeth is seduced by the structural lineage that could make him and his nonexistent children kings. His uncontrollable desire originates in the period's normative generational time and echoes centuries later in Edelman's critique of a twenty-first-century mentality that strives for political and material gains not for the present, but "for our children."⁵⁴ Moreover, Lady Macbeth urges her husband to kill Scotland's king by citing the horror of child slaughter:

I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.

(I.vii.54–9)

Using effective emotional manipulation, Lady Macbeth equates killing a child with killing a king, both actions that disrupt futurity. Although her formulation disregards futurity in one respect, it simultaneously uses Macbeth's desire for the futurity inherent in the immortality of kingship as motivation to commit murder.⁵⁵ As Love argues, Macbeth is impatient for the future, and this impatience, combined with his irrational desire, causes Macbeth to accept his wife's urgings as rational.⁵⁶ Lady Macbeth, whom Love terms the play's queerest character, observes and then convinces her husband of immortality in an enterprise doomed from the start.⁵⁷ Believing in the part of the prophecy that promises to make him king, Macbeth nevertheless ignores the rest, which promises that the seeds of Banquo will also become kings. Therefore, Macbeth's efforts to maintain generational time in spite of external conflicts—the continued existence of Duncan's sons, as well as Macbeth's own lack of an heir—cause him to engage in an unacknowledged queer temporality. MacDonald argues that Macbeth chooses this asynchronous path, and while his actions do send him down a queer temporal trajectory, Macbeth's choice is actually an effort to conform to generational time, not to sidestep it.⁵⁸ Thus, Macbeth enters a queer mode of time in order to secure his position within generational time, irrationally positioning himself for an impossible future.

This misrecognition of futurity is paralleled in miniature by the short stage life of Macduff's son. In addition to heralding the play's queer temporality, the son's childlike body and innocent behavior elicit a misrecognition of futurity that parallels Macbeth's doomed interpretation of the witches' prophecies, which leads him to attain Scotland's crown through murder. Neither Macduff's son nor Macbeth is capable of achieving the future they either seemingly signify or desire. However, while the son's knowing and innocent character acts as a productive representation of a futureless queer temporality, one that persists through death, Macbeth never achieves a productive queer subjecthood. Though caught in a queer temporality, Macbeth's ultimate desire for reproductive futurity prevents his acceptance of alternatives to futurity.

Hence, the impossible future microcosmically symbolized by Macduff's son haunts Macbeth, both character and play. This aftereffect emerges most clearly in the famous "tomorrow" speech:

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
 To the last syllable of recorded time,
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

(V.v.19–23)

In these lines, Macbeth bemoans the slow march of tomorrows that signify futurity for others but nothing for himself. He has no tomorrow, no children, and no future, and his speech reveals his preoccupation with lineage even as he eschews life. The “brief candle” conjures up Macduff’s son, the play’s briefest candle (a metaphoric lifespan), and “out, out” echoes the aggressive snuffing out of the son’s life by Macbeth’s hired henchman.⁵⁹ In death, young Macduff symbolizes failed futurity, yet the character also lives on, haunting Macbeth’s speech with the specter of the king’s own inevitable downfall. The lingering effects of young Macduff’s death emphasize the contrast between a possible future and an impossible one, two temporal modes between which Macbeth himself is caught. By killing Macduff’s family and believing in an impossible future, Macbeth unwittingly embraces all that is socially nonviable, just as Macduff’s son does in his headlong rush into death. The son cannot live, so he accepts death; Macbeth cannot maintain his crown, but he refuses to accept defeat. Even as he concedes the impossibility of his desired future, Macbeth refuses to stray from the course of action already set in motion.

Macbeth’s failure to comply with futurity, revealed in his attempts to control it, results in his tragic downfall and, more importantly, discloses a critical narrative function for Macduff’s son. Young Macduff both creates and ends the future for Macbeth and the play. The value of putting Edelman in dialogue with *Macbeth*, then, is to produce a reading that can address the child on both a symbolic and narrative register—as the Child and as a queer character, respectively. Edelman writes that queer names “those abjected as non-reproductive, anti-social, opposed to viability, and so as threats to the Child who assures and embodies collective survival.”⁶⁰ By these definitions, Macduff’s son is both the Child—symbolizing innocence and futurity within the narrative world of *Macbeth*—and the nonviable queer, who, with his disregard for death and uncanny adulthood, threatens the very way of life for which the Child stands. This apparent contradiction is a productive one for both the play and queer studies, and deliberate consideration of Macduff’s son adds nuance to our un-

derstanding of both children and time in *Macbeth*. Macduff's son is a child who threatens the Child, and this conception extends Edelman's work beyond queer adults to queer children, offering queer studies another source of illumination for the fascinating, yet ever-obscure child.

NOTES

¹ For more on child actors, see Lucy Munro, *Children of the Queen's Revels: A Jacobean Theatre Repertory* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005); Michael Witmore, *Pretty Creatures: Children and Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007); and Edel Lamb, *Performing Childhood in the Early Modern Theatre: The Children's Playing Companies (1599–1613)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). For the Western history of early modern childhood and the evolution of its treatment in scholarship, see Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Vintage, 1962); Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 1 of *Children in English Society*, 2 vols. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1969); Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); and Andrea Immel and Witmore, eds., *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550–1800* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

² Joseph Campana, "Shakespeare's Children," *LiteratureC* 8, 1 (January 2011): 1–14.

³ Campana, "Killing Shakespeare's Children: The Cases of *Richard III* and *King John*," *Shakespeare* 3, 1 (April 2007): 18–39, 22.

⁴ Campana, "The Child's Two Bodies: Shakespeare, Sovereignty, and the End of Succession," *ELH* 81, 3 (Fall 2014): 811–39, 833.

⁵ See Margaret Omberg, "Macbeth's Barren Sceptre," *SN* 68, 1 (1996): 39–47. Neither Young Siward nor Macduff's son are present in Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicle of Scotland*; in the *Chronicle of England*, Holinshed notes that Macduff has children, but without mention of gender (Omberg, p. 39).

⁶ See Cleanth Brooks's argument for the child's symbolic function in *Macbeth* ("The Naked Babe and the Cloak of Manliness," in *The Well-Wrought Urn* [New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975], pp. 22–49); and L. C. Knights's condemnation of the literal style of criticism associated with A. C. Bradley ("How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?," in *Explorations: Essays in Criticism Mainly on the Literature of the Seventeenth Century* [New York: New York Univ. Press, 1964], pp. 15–54). For more on whether or not the Macbeths had children, see Marvin Rosenberg's argument for the "Macbeth-child's felt presence" ("Lady Macbeth's Indispensable Child," *Educational Theatre Journal* 26, 1 [March 1974]: 14–9, 14); Omberg, who, in contrast to Rosenberg, claims that the play's "careful counterpointing of fathers and sons throw[s] Macbeth's lack of progeny into relief" (p. 42); and Michael D. Bristol's consideration of why audiences want to know if the Macbeths had children, a mode of analysis he terms "vernacular interpretation" ("How Many Children Did She Have?")

in *Philosophical Shakespeares*, ed. John J. Joughin [New York: Routledge, 2000], pp. 18–33, 20).

⁷ Here I must again acknowledge Campana's recently published article, "The Child's Two Bodies," in which he engages the children of *Macbeth*, along with other Shakespearean children, to explore disruptions to linear temporality, in particular sovereignty. Despite the similarity in content, our investments differ significantly, as he figures the child's "two bodies" as evidence of a cultural breakdown in the perpetuity of sovereignty, and my aim is to reveal young Macduff as a dramatic device foreshadowing Macbeth's queer engagement with time.

⁸ For a more comprehensive portrait of the debates regarding queer theory's relevance to early modern texts, see Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120, 5 (October 2005): 1608–17, on "homohistory" (p. 1609); Carolyn Dinshaw and Karma Lochrie, "Queering History," *PMLA* 121, 3 (May 2006): 837–9, for a critical response to Goldberg and Menon; and Valerie Traub, "The New Unhistoricism in Queer Studies," *PMLA* 128, 1 (January 2013): 21–39, who argues "there remain ample reasons to practice a queer historicism dedicated to showing how categories, however mythic, phantasmic, and incoherent, came to be" (p. 35).

⁹ See Traub, p. 26, who rejects the unhistoricism of Goldberg and Menon and critiques the queer practice of sidestepping issues of chronology.

¹⁰ Will Stockton, "Shakespeare and Queer Theory," review of Menon, ed., *Shakespeare: A Queer Companion to the Complete Works of Shakespeare*, *SQ* 63, 2 (Summer 2012): 224–35, 233.

¹¹ See Will Stockton, p. 231.

¹² For more on the sexual queer child—the prevailing entry into discussions of children, childhood, and queerness—see James Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3–58; Michael Moon, *A Small Boy and Others: Imitation and Initiation in American Culture from Henry James to Andy Warhol* (Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 1–14; Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds., *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. ix–xxxviii; Kevin Ohi, *Innocence and Rapture: The Erotic Child in Pater, Wilde, James, and Nabokov* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1–12; and Kathryn Bond Stockton, *The Queer Child, Or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2009), pp. 119–53. For intersections between sexual desire and children in the early modern period, see Peter Stallybrass on the erotic gaze compelled by boy actors playing women ("Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman [New York: Routledge, 1992], pp. 64–83, 74); and Mary Bly on the erotic pleasures of wordplay in the Whitefriars boys' company (*Queer Virgins and Virgin Queens on the Early Modern Stage* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000], p. 21).

¹³ For more on the former interpretation, see Donald W. Foster, "Macbeth's War on Time," *ELR* 16, 2 (Spring 1986): 319–42; and William Blissett, "The Secret'st Man of Blood: A Study of Dramatic Irony in *Macbeth*," *SQ* 10, 3 (Summer 1959): 392–408. See also Katie Knowles, who likens Macbeth to Herod in *Shakespeare's Boys: A Cultural History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 44.

¹⁴ Catherine Belsey, "Little Princes: Shakespeare's Royal Children," in *Shakespeare and Childhood*, ed. Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh, and Robert Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 32–48, 37. Although Belsey acknowledges young Macduff's playful attitude, this additional quality does not undermine his sentimental characterization; rather, it increases the pathos of his death (p. 43).

¹⁵ Ann Blake, "Shakespeare's Roles for Children: A Stage History," *TN* 48, 3 (1994): 122–37, 123.

¹⁶ Carol Chillington Rutter, *Shakespeare and Child's Play: Performing Lost Boys on Stage and Screen* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 166.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Knowles, p. 131.

¹⁹ Knowles, p. 58. She quotes "oxymoron in action" from Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of Macbeth* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 261.

²⁰ Rutter, "Remind Me: How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?," in "Macbeth and Its Afterlife," special issue, *ShS* 57 (2004): 38–53, 40. To articulate the simultaneously endangered and dangerous nature of children in contemporary Britain, Rutter cites a sensational news story about two ten-year-olds who murdered a younger child: "From this instant, childhood was tainted, children evil" (p. 42).

²¹ For a more complete history of early modern childhood, see Ariès, who claims that "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (p. 128), though a more engaged, "'coddling' attitude" developed during the early modern period (p. 130). See also Pinchbeck and Hewitt, who offer a qualification of Ariès's work, claiming that childhood as a concept was present in early modern England, but not in an emotionally identifiable way (p. 4); and Pollock, who seeks to correct misconceptions about parenting and childhood based on the "Ariès thesis" (p. 2).

²² Marjorie Garber, *Coming of Age in Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 30.

²³ Morriss Henry Partee, *Childhood in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), p. 11.

²⁴ Garber, p. 30.

²⁵ Partee, p. 90–1.

²⁶ See Karin Lesnik-Oberstein and Stephen Thomson, "What Is Queer Theory Doing with the Child?," *Parallax* 8, 1 (2002): 35–46. For a response, see Kenneth Kidd, "Queer Theory's Child and Children's Literature Studies," *PMLA* 126, 1 (January 2011): 182–8.

²⁷ Kidd, p. 183.

²⁸ Kathryn Bond Stockton, p. 30.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Robert S. Miola (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), IV.ii.30. All subsequent references to *Macbeth* are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text by act, scene, and line number.

³¹ Ariès, p. 130.

³² Anna Maria Jones, "The Victorian Childhood of Manga: Toward a Queer Theory of the Child in Toboso Yana's *Kuroshitsuji*," *Criticism* 55, 1 (Winter 2013): 1–41, 2.

³³ Jones, p. 8.

³⁴ Jones, p. 14.

³⁵ Compare young Macduff's response to Giovanni's emotional reaction to his mother's death in act III, scene ii in John Webster's *The White Devil*.

³⁶ Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, ed. Stephen Orgel (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), II.i.8–11.

³⁷ Garber notes that speaking like an adult is one of several developments that must happen for a child to transition to responsible adulthood (p. 82).

³⁸ Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2005), p. 5.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See the emphasis on Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* for a particularly salient example of early modern reproductive futurity.

⁴¹ Foster, p. 324.

⁴² Blissett, p. 407.

⁴³ See Luisa Guj, "Macbeth and the Seeds of Time," *ShakS* 18 (January 1986): 175–88, 180–1.

⁴⁴ Julia MacDonald, "Demonic Time in *Macbeth*," *BJJ* 17, 1 (May 2010): 76–96, 80.

⁴⁵ MacDonald, p. 84.

⁴⁶ Heather Love, "Milk," in *Shakesqueer*, ed. Menon (Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2011), pp. 201–8. Love argues for temporality as a means to link *Macbeth* and queer theory, noting that the play is particularly open to queer readings when queer denotes "deviations from normative time—rather than any specifically sexual form of transgression" (p. 201).

⁴⁷ See Elizabeth Freeman on the backward pull of "temporal drag" (*Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* [Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2010], p. 64). For a compelling version of queer futurity and a response to Lee Edelman's *No Future*, see José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 2009).

⁴⁸ Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham NC: Duke Univ. Press, 2004), p. 3.

⁴⁹ Edelman, *No Future*, p. 19. Edelman adds, "the cult of the Child permits no shrines to the queerness of boys and girls, since queerness, for contemporary culture at large ... is understood as bringing children and childhood to an end" (Ibid.).

⁵⁰ Edelman, *No Future*, p. 31.

⁵¹ In addition to the witches' prophecies, several histories of Scotland claim that Fleance was the progenitor of King James I and the royal Stuarts. See William Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 67 and 122–3.

⁵² See Kristen Poole, "Physics Divined: The Science of Calvin, Hooker, and *Macbeth*," in "Shakespeare and Science," special issue, *SCRev* 26, 1 and 2 (Spring and Summer 2009): 127–52, 142.

⁵³ See Edelman, *No Future*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Edelman, *No Future*, p. 3. Rutter, too, discusses the intersection of children, anxiety, and the future ("Remind Me," p. 53).

⁵⁵ See James Wermers, "Sex in the Wooden O: Exploring a Hetero v. Queer Matrix in the USF Productions of *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Macbeth*," *JWOS* 10 (2010): 60–76. Wermers details the ways in which the *Macbeths* explicitly "flout a default heteronormative *telos*" (p. 68).

⁵⁶ See Love, p. 202. For more on Macbeth's impatience, see Howard Marchitello, "Speed and the Problem of Real Time in *Macbeth*," *SQ* 64, 4 (Winter 2013): 425–48.

⁵⁷ See Love, p. 203.

⁵⁸ See MacDonald, p. 80.

⁵⁹ For more on the metaphorical role of candles in this play, see David-Everett Blythe, "Banquo's Candles," *ELH* 58, 4 (Winter 1991): 773–8.

⁶⁰ Edelman, "Against Survival: Queerness in a Time That's Out of Joint," *SQ* 62, 2 (Summer 2011): 148–69, 148.

Nathaniel C. Leonard, *Circling the Nuptial in *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing**

Shakespearean comedy has a unique relationship with the restaging of marriage's legal and ecclesiastical rituals: it is preoccupied with them, while going to great lengths to avoid staging them. This article explores this dramaturgical legerdemain, as seen in *As You Like It* and *Much Ado about Nothing*, and invites modern readers to consider the sort of threats posed by the restaging of marriage—both as a ceremony and as a contract—on the early modern English stage. These two plays not only demonstrate the period's fascination with the legal, economic, and liturgical ramifications of marriage but also show the narrative potential that emerges from deftly navigating these cultural and religious taboos.

Scott Oldenburg, *The Petition on the Early English Stage*

Petitioning was a common, even essential, practice in early modern governance, involving people from all ranks of society. Especially for commoners, the petition, even though highly scripted, offered a moment of direct communication with those in authority. Petitioning scenes were also ubiquitous on the early English stage. In such scenes, the petition was a special kind of stage property, familiar yet imbued with political significance for commoners and elites alike. This article, moving from typical petitioning scenes in plays such as *A Knack to Know a Knave* and *Nobody and Somebody* to the striking scenes in which petitions are torn in *The Spanish Tragedy* and *The Second Part of Henry the Sixth*, interprets petitioning scenes as demonstrating a popular politics founded on reciprocal social relations.

Amanda Zoch, *Macduff's Son and the Queer Temporality of *Macbeth**

Most early modern children are studied for their value as victims or historical objects. This article, however, argues for the narrative function of children, and consequently considers Macduff's son as a harbinger of the queer temporality of *Macbeth*. Even in the early modern period, children symbolized futurity, yet I contend that young Macduff's unsettling characterization fails to achieve that expectation. He oscillates between innocence and uncanny adulthood, contrasting states that mark the young boy as a "queer child." I argue, therefore, that young Macduff's disrupted and disrupting life offers a microcosm of Macbeth's relation to