Introduction
"Look on't again"

Deanne Williams

Macbeth, Act 2, scene 2, and Duncan and Banquo are dead. Macbeth stares at his bloody hands and quakes: "I am afraid to think what I have done; / Look on't again I dare not" (2.2.53–4).[1] Lady Macbeth has no such qualms. "The sleeping and the dead," she chides her husband, "are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood / That fears a painted devil" (56–8). The eye of childhood may fear masks and monsters, but it can also conjure strange shapes from the everyday, seeing murder and magic, terror and wonder, in the most ordinary experiences.

Children are everywhere in Shakespeare: uncertain heirs, dispossessed daughters, fearful sons. Few authors are as sensitive in charting all the thrills of their imagination and all the terrors of their realities. And yet, Shakespeare was not unique in his fascination with the young. Our cover image makes manifest an Elizabethan family's love for their children, with their ages carefully inscribed above their heads, "Aetatis: 7," etc. Reflecting a growing vogue across early modern Europe for portraits of children, this painting is notable for including the children's beloved pets, a guinea pig and a finch, as valued members of the family, clutched firmly in their hands. The children's sumptuous dress reflects their high social status, but it also exhibits care and concern for the children as little Elizabethans. The children's confident handling and ownership of their pets anticipates their ascendancy once they reach adulthood. The guinea pig, the earliest known depiction of a living member of the species in English art, reflects growing trade with South America, and the finch often serves as a symbol of the Christian soul. The painting thus situates the children that are its subject within a wider tradition of Renaissance painting that negotiates between worldly goods, often associated with exploration, and the life and needs of the spirit. A painting such as Holbein's *The Ambassadors* represents this conflict with a globe and an anamorphic skull. But this painting, by an unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist (possibly the Master of the Countess of Warwick), uses the more age-appropriate focus on the family

pets to suggest not tension and contradiction, but easy and nurturing coexistence. The painting's central figure, the big sister who clutches the guinea pig, also illustrates the early modern period's evolving culture of girlhood, with girls emerging as figures of humanist learning, as dramatic heroines, as performers, and as authors in their own right.[2]

Children had long been fixtures of performance, from the plays and pageants of the medieval church to Tudor courtly pageantry. The young Thomas More was tempted to perform, at twelve, when he worked as a page at the household of Lord Chancellor and Archbishop John Morton, and he improvised his own part among the players.[3] A century later, Hamlet comments on the popularity of children's companies, which he describes as "an eyrie of children, little eyases" (2.2.337) or untrained hawks. School was a performance, too, as grammar-school students were armed with humanist-inspired argument and recitation. Joel Altman described its interrogative what, why, and wherefore as "the Tudor play of mind," and, more recently, Lynn Enterline has reflected upon the emotional and psychological costs of this institutional system, as well as its cultural inheritance.[4] The "Tudor play of mind" could be seen on the stage as well, not only in the public theaters where boys displayed their training and abilities, but also in the courtly masques and country house entertainments that made boys and girls objects of observation for families and guests and friends. By the early seventeenth century, childhood, performance, and schooling were concatenating in new ways. Shifts in the structures of familial economies provoked distinctive discourses of lineage, while the political shift from an heirless queen to a new Scottish king with an intact and loving family gave a new and particular cultural attention to the children's body in the body politic. The Puritans, too, attended brilliantly and movingly to children: in primers for the young, in elegiac tales of holy boys and girls, and in the recognition that their heirs would carry on devotional and political practices that would eventually make North America the succeeding child to old paternal Britain.[5]

The history of childhood is a relatively young field. Only in the 1960s, in fact, did scholars begin to realize that childhood *had* a history, setting off perceptions of unsentimental pre- and early modern attitudes to children against post-Romantic celebrations of the child as a special category of person and historicizing notions of childhood as a distinct phrase of human development.[6] Since then, there has been a veritable explosion of work on the topic, which has produced a very clear picture of what it meant to be a child in early modern Europe. Scholars have recognized the renaissance of childhood in the Renaissance, and many literary critics and social

historians have come to see how the idea of "childhood" itself was not limited to the invention of a post-Enlightenment modernity, but, in fact, it enjoyed a vivid life throughout a range of historical periods, including (and especially) the Renaissance.[7] Statistics and archival documents have produced information about the composition of families, proletarian and aristocratic; the economics of poverty, orphanage, and abandonment; policies on childrearing, child labor, and corporal punishment; the use of wet nurses and midwives; and birthing practices and infant mortality rates.[8] New histories of childhood and of children's literature have revealed categories of imagination and experience long neglected by canonical scholarship and have shown how the idea of the "adult" book or play or work of art or social life had meaning in relation to a pre-adult identity.[9]

Accordingly, a picture has emerged of what it meant to be a child in early modern England – yet less so of what childhood meant in and to this culture, of the evolution of childhood as a category of identity, and of its place in larger discursive formations. This is not to be found in records of children's births and deaths, but rather in the literary and dramatic representations and other cultural projects that took them up and in which they played a material role. *Childhood, Education and the Stage in Early Modern England* builds new synthesis of theatrical and social history with literary criticism. It showcases how these three major discourses "grew up" together in the early modern period, each coming to understand itself through interaction with the others and all concerned in different ways with the task of growing up.

Witnessing the efflorescence of an institutionalized system of public education in England, the early modern period undertook a massive, unprecedented investment in its children. In its revival of classical rhetorical instruction, the sixteenth-century English humanist curriculum sought to mold its young male students into proper gentlemen, which was advantageous to the Commonwealth.[10] Yet, in the mythological narratives and classical motifs and genres that it imported, and in the pedagogical methods it developed, the humanist curriculum conditioned the radical thought and subversive literary experimentation that characterized the English Renaissance, destabilizing norms of sexuality, gender, class, and religion.[11] The most visible and complex scene of such experimentation is, of course, the early modern theater. The humanist curriculum's emphasis on memory and elocution, as well as translation, and its incorporation of dramatic exercises from grammar school through university had a profound effect on the early English stage, from its themes, to its actors, to its taste in jokes. By the late 1500s, famous playing companies

consisting exclusively of boys flourished in London, and professional stage companies featured boy actors playing children's and women's parts.[12] On the private stage, girls as well as boys appeared as performers in the evolving genre of the Jacobean court masque.[13]

Childhood, Education and the Stage in Early Modern England presents the best of current research on the idioms and ideologies of childhood in performative and pedagogic culture. Distinct from previous collections and monographs on childhood in advancing this triangulated set of concepts, this book pays specific attention to the cultural and ideological matrices of theatre and education in which children were always enmeshed and for whose ends they were made to signify.[14] Including plays written for the private and the public stage, ranging across plays and poetry, and rhetorical manuals and scientific treatises, and spanning canonical authors from Shakespeare to Milton and Marvell and beyond, the essays assembled in this volume present a new view of the literary and the social meaning of the young in early modern England. And they all discover, in the child, a figure both marginal and pivotal, normative and disruptive, desiring and desired, cherished and abused. Some contributions focus exclusively on Shakespeare; others address specific writers from the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries; still others offer syntheses of scholarship on theatrical traditions, iconography, and myth, and changing habits of the classroom and the home. Thus, the volume's critical perspective is not confined to the problems of literary influence, the sexual dynamics of Elizabethan pedagogy, the fate of child dramatic characters, the history of children's playing companies, or the emergence of children's literature, but it comprehends all of them. It points to an early modern constellation of questions about selfhood and its origins, sovereignty, modernity, and the limits of the human, that reveal how urgently early modern English culture performed itself on and through its children.

Shakespeare is central to this book. Although its chapters are not exclusively devoted to Shakespeare, they all contend, in different ways, with his influence and legacy. The chapters in the opening section, "Shakespearean Childhoods," redefine Shakespeare's child characters and representations of childhood in ways moving beyond traditional conceptions of childhood that emphasize innocence and authenticity. The Shakespearean childhoods that emerge in this section are, instead, performed, commodified, and always, already fallen. For Seth Lerer in Chapter 1, "Hamlet's Boyhood," childhood is a rhetorical condition as well as a cultural and historical one: a condition in which the "questioning perspectives and performances of the schoolroom stay vivid in the minds

and mouths of adult characters" (17). Lerer reframes *Hamlet*, that foundational text of interiority and subjectivity, as a play that explores the externalized performances of the humanist classroom. As intimations and recollections of Hamlet's boyhood, "a boyhood of the book and of the theatre" (21), find their way into the play and make themselves "everpresent in the play's real time" (21), *Hamlet* binds childhood to its overarching philosophical concerns with time and memory, as well as to the urgent agenda of performance.

In Chapter 2, "The Traffic in Children: Shipwrecked Shakespeare, Precarious *Pericles*," Joseph Campana redefines Shakespearean childhood not through rhetorical performance but through commodification. Campana and Lerer each address the role of education in childhood: while, for Lerer, education is tied to classroom performance, for Campana, it is part, instead, of a process of commodification that he calls "traffic in children," drawing upon Gayle Rubin's key formulation.[15] Whereas Shakespearean childhoods have so often been framed through boyhood (from the tragically sacrificial Arthur in *King John* and the Boy in *Henry V* to the comically autobiographical William in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Campana turns, instead, to *Pericles*'s girl character, Marina. A figure for the traffic in children, but also for precocious learning, or "princely training" (3.3.16), Marina wends her way around the Mediterranean, bringing together different forms of children's vulnerability and oppression in the period, as children were kidnapped or otherwise compelled into different forms of "trade," including, as Bart van Es's recent work has publicized, the theater.[16]

For Campana, the image of the helpless child not only symbolizes the historical conditions of childhood in the early modern period, but also the wider experience of human precarity and subordination to the stronger forces of trade and "traffic." For Charlotte Scott, Shakespearean childhood similarly signifies beyond chronological age as she examines childhood through the lens, not of innocence, but "the impossibility of innocence" (64). In Chapter 3, "Incapable and Shallow Innocents: Mourning Shakespeare's Children in *Richard III* and *The Winter's Tale*," Scott contends that "the idea of childhood is conditioned by loss, grief, and hindsight" (67), and is animated, as well, through such adult experiences and feelings. She returns to the sacrificial children of *The Winter's Tale* and *Richard III* in order to locate them within the adult minds and imaginations that behold them. In *The Winter's Tale*, Mamillius provides both a counterpoint to and instigation of the eruption of murderous jealousy in Leontes. In *Richard III*, it is the young princes that become "choric touchstones for the plays' copious renditions of grief" (69), and specifically

the "almost continual chorus of grieving women" (69). Bridging the worlds of adulthood and childhood, the innocence of Shakespearean children is fully understood only in the wider contexts of grieving, flawed, and even villainous adulthood.

For Charlotte Scott, "the concept of childhood is always animated by adults" (59). This is true as well for Lucy Munro, who opens the second section, "Beyond the Boy Actor," with an account of the construction of children's speech in the work of adult playwrights. In Chapter 4, "Speaking like a Child: Staging Children's Speech in Early Modern Drama," Munro attends first to the cultural assumptions that underwrite children's instruction in good or sanctioned forms of speech. Munro then proceeds to analyze the conventions that govern children's "stage speech": "the use of monosyllables, simple sentence structures, deference to adult authority, and an impression of naïveté" (89). Yet in characters such as the Boy in *Henry V*, amidst these indicators of childish speech, she locates aspects of maturity, precocity, and wisdom that transcend expectations of childish incapacity. Performances of children's speech in plays by children's companies are similarly set off against child actors performing "adult" speech, manifesting a keen self-consciousness as well as manipulation of defining assumptions about childhood and adulthood.

Bart van Es's Chapter 5, "Shakespeare versus Blackfriars: Satiric Comedy, Domestic Tragedy, and the Boy Actor in *Othello*," also reflects upon the performance of adult roles in children's companies, turning his attention to one key example, George Chapman's *May Day*. Highlighting the significant similarities, at the level of plot, between this play and Shakespeare's *Othello*, van Es considers the implications of the performance by children's companies of "adult" (van Es's word for it is "hard-hearted") subject matter such as adultery and domestic violence. With an overarching culture of domination that extended from the chapel master's control over his boy actors to the author's greater control over his play-texts, the children's companies featured plays that manifested a "prevailing distrust of female professions of virtue," but also forced its child actors "in the direction of adult sexuality" (110). To the extent that it engages the repertory of children's companies, then, *Othello* constitutes a reflection upon the "linked categories of gender, genre, and childhood" (117) as they are represented in both children's and adult companies, answering sexual satire in the former with tragic pathos in the latter.

For Bart van Es, *Othello* is Shakespeare's answer (or one of them) to the children's companies. For Bastian Kuhl, in Chapter 6, "The Metamorphoses of Cupid: John Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* and

the Return of the Children's Playing Companies," the children's company satirizes the adult stage. Performed by the new Children of the Chapel overseen by Henry Evans, a 1600 production of John Lyly's *Love's Metamorphosis* features a "strikingly grown-up Cupid" (123) that embodies the company's renewed identity and commercial power, as well as comic vigor. As Evans and his boy actors sought to promote themselves as a company that was not only "all grown up" but also a threat to established theatrical companies, Cupid metamorphosed from wayward boy into sovereign deity, transcending the childish qualities of Lyly's previous Cupids in *Sappho and Phao* and *Galatea*. This Cupid, "as a commanding sovereign" (131), provides a study in uncontained, capricious power as well as desire.

The chapters in the second section reflect in different ways on Hamlet's well-known remark about boy actors as "little eyases," referring to the reemergence of the Children of St. Paul's and the Children of the Chapel around 1600. They illustrate the focus, in the history of the theatre, on the boy actor's performance of multiple roles that extend beyond childhood, revealing the implication of the child in theatrical representations and cultural discourses of sexuality, tragedy, and violence. The third section, "Girls and Boys," moves beyond the boy actor's performance of boyhood to examine his performance of childhood in another gender, girlhood, as well as the advent of the girl actor on the private stage. In Chapter 7, "The Further Adventures of Ganymede," Stephen Orgel turns to Ganymede as "a metonym for a theatre in which young men performed as and were interchangeable with women" (143), but also as a figure for education, as in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, where Ganymede teaches Orlando the ways of love. Orgel explores the "further adventures" of a figure not only represented as passive, kidnapped, and subservient, but also as charged with sexual desire, arousing, specifically, the pederastic energies of Jove. The Elizabethan theater, with its boy actors playing female parts, marshals similar forms of excitement; these feelings had their place as well in the humanist structures of early modern education. However, the love of beautiful youth extends from Ganymede to girls, and Orgel returns to Shakespeare to reveal how these insights about Ganymede produce a renewed understanding of the prepubescent twins of *Twelfth Night*, in which the objects of Olivia's and Antonio's passions are fourteen years old, and of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which the heroine is "not yet fourteen."

Turning from boy actors' impersonations of girls to girl performers themselves, Deanne Williams, in Chapter 8, "Chastity, Speech, and the

Girl Masquer," offers a prehistory of Milton's *Comus*, or *A Masque Presented at Ludlow Castle*, in which the fifteen-year-old Alice Egerton, as the Lady, performed complex philosophical speeches and musically challenging songs. Arguing that *Comus* represents less the beginning than "the culmination of a longstanding tradition of girls' performance" (163), Williams charts the history of the girl performer from medieval religious drama through Tudor civic pageantry and Elizabethan and Jacobean courtly and private entertainments. She shows, as well, how the discourse of chastity embodied by Milton's Lady draws upon performances of girlhood within these traditions, in masques and entertainments that foreground the performing girl not as a figure of lascivious desire, but as a proponent of chaste love.

Continuing the discussion of Milton's *Comus*, and moving from the girl actor to female physiology, Douglas Trevor's Chapter 9, "Milton and Female Perspiration," takes up Milton's description of the seat on which the Lady sits as "smeared with gums of glutinous heat." Trevor situates the masque's thematics of gender and chastity in terms of medical knowledge, specifically Galenic theory. Whereas the debate between the Lady and Comus displays their investments in humanist education, the gums that fasten the Lady to the chair raise, instead, the subject of Galenic medicine and its theories about the workings of the female body. For Trevor, Comus is a "committed Galenist" (192) who attempts to heat the Lady's body for procreative purposes. As he explains, it then falls to Sabrina, "a nymph whose own history of abuse can, in the *Masque*, prevent another such story from being written" (199), and a figure of the extreme lengths to which chastity may go to preserve itself to neutralize the sweat that Comus's magic has engendered.

In Part 4, "Afterlives," three chapters offer a retrospective reflection on the Shakespearean cultures of childhood that are the focus of this volume. Blaine Greteman's Chapter 10, "'Too green / Yet for lust, but not for Love': Andrew Marvell and the Invention of Children's Literature," traces the connection between childhood as it played out on the Shakespearean stage, and the advent of children's literature. Openly acknowledging and addressing Marvell's participation in the pederastic desires that Orgel locates in the adventures of Ganymede, Greteman holds Marvell's desiring representations of young girls up against a seventeenth-century Puritan culture that was intensely interested in the religious education of children, locating it within a tradition of discourses of radical dissent that used childhood innocence as a political trope. For Greteman, Marvell's "childish nymphs" reflect his self-conscious investment in this politicization of childhood.

Linking Marvell's "Young Love," with its description of the beloved as "little infant," to the key political issues of voice, freedom, and consent that motivated the English Revolution, Greteman charts the expression of related themes in early Puritan children's literature, only to have this politicized language fall silent as children and children's literature were rendered compliantly apolitical in the eighteenth century.

Greteman's conclusion usefully stands as a motto for the essays in this volume: "early modern childhood was political – on stage, in the classroom, and on the page – and . . . the trials of subjectivity do not always await the age of consent" (221). But James J. Marino's Chapter 11, "All Macbeth's Sons," reveals how these political struggles moved inward as the advent of psychoanalysis drew upon Shakespearean models in its analyses of what Freud called "the family romance." As Marino acknowledges, Macbeth poses problems for a Freudian interpretation, as it depicts no obvious primal struggle between son and father, nor does Lady Macbeth's madness fall into the patterns of Dora-like erotic transference. It is, nevertheless, filled with images of children, specifically the killing of children. As Marino points out, infanticide, more than parricide, is the dominant mythological narrative, and it was well known in the humanist classroom through stories of Romulus and Remus, Brutus, and other dynastic founders, as well as in biblical narratives of the births of Moses and Jesus. Framed through the Laius complex, which was actually marginalized in Freudian theory, *Macbeth*'s obsessive depictions of violence against children manifest a deep-seated impulse not to kill the father, but to deprive other men of their heirs.

By way of conclusion, Chapter 12, Elizabeth Pentland's "Modern Retrospectives: Childhood and Education in Tom Stoppard's Shakespearean Plays," revisits the subject of boyhood in *Hamlet*, which opens this volume. Examining Stoppard's engagements with Shakespearean childhood in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *Dogg's Hamlet, Cahoot's Macbeth*, as well as in *Arcadia*, which may (on the surface) be less overtly Shakespearean, Pentland argues that "Stoppard's treatment of childhood . . . is closely bound up with his treatment of education" (249). *Dogg's Hamlet* returns to the scenes of linguistic instruction in the humanist classroom that play such a central role in the discussions of early modern childhood in this volume. It even concludes with a dramatic recitation: in this case, a fifteen-minute version of *Hamlet*. By means of the boy actor, Alfred, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* memorializes the transvestite stage and the forms of sexual and physical oppression it represented to the children who worked there. And in *Arcadia*, Thomasina's status as *docta puella*, or learned

girl, places her squarely in the Ovidian elegiac tradition but also pays due homage to Shakespearean girls such as Bianca and, more tragically, Juliet.

Many of the contributions to *Childhood, Education and the Stage* bring new interpretations of specific plays that center on what Campana calls the "characteristically discomfiting precocity" and "perverse mobility" in "Shakespeare's child figures" (47). These chapters focus not just on specific figures, but on what Scott identifies as the broader "idea of childhood and its pivotal role in the adult imagination" (59). In these essays, plays such as *Richard III, The Winter's Tale, Hamlet, Pericles, Othello* and many others reshape themselves along the lines of memory and loss, innocence and knowledge, and learning and recitation. For the voice of the child, all the "fractured and compromised processes" (82) that Munro identifies, fills Shakespeare's theater, much as it filled the ears of early modern audiences everywhere.

Moving beyond Shakespearean contexts, our contributors see authors such as George Chapman, John Lyly, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton inflecting the nature of childhood performance and the historical shape of children's literature in the seventeenth century. While van Es takes us from the children's theatre repertory to raise questions about "sexualization on the children's stage," Kuhl's revelation of Lyly's "strikingly grown-up" Cupid serves as a "powerful expression of the troupe's self-fashioning" (121). For Trevor, the Lady of Milton's *Comus*, performed by fifteen-year-old Alice Egerton, constitutes a reinterpretation of humanism that extends to and is reflected in the poet's "ability to inhabit a female perspective" (185) that announces itself in terms of a strikingly manly moral fortitude that powerfully contests, from the private stage, a previous generation's sexualization of children. And it is precisely this sexualization of children that Greteman locates as the origins of children's literature: in a transposition from the stage to the page that radically re-envisions childhood "as a safe haven from adult questions of choice, obligation, and sin" (221).

This is a collection of historical scholarship, but it is also an assembly of theoretical and cultural positions, challenging traditional methods of research and textual recovery. Marino, for example, sees Sigmund Freud as a great reader of Shakespearean familial conflict, and he proffers an interpretation of *Macbeth*, with its "violence against children" and "anxieties and aggressions of kingly fathers" through Freud's psychoanalytic eyes (242). Orgel, developing his ground-breaking arguments about boy actors on the stage, turns to the pervasive Ovidianism of Shakespeare and his contemporaries to posit a mythology of childhood and performance in which the story of Ganymede serves "as a metonym for a theater