

# ‘HER STRONG TOIL OF GRACE’: CHARISMATIC PERFORMANCE FROM QUEENS TO QUAKERS

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Recounting the meeting on the river Cydnus where Cleopatra first ‘pursed up’ (2.2.194) his commander’s heart, Enobarbus says:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne  
Burned on the water. The poop was beaten gold;  
Purple the sails, and so perfumèd that  
The winds were love-sick with them. The oars were  
silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
The water which they beat to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. (2.2.198–204)

As many have recognized, this extravagant imagery cleaves closely to Shakespeare’s source. Yet, where North’s Plutarch reads like the inventory of a royal treasury, ‘the poope wherof was gold, the sailes of purple, the owers of silver’, Enobarbus’s speech is a fever dream of enchanted objects vying for erotic union with their numinous mistress.<sup>1</sup> The queen exerts such centripetal force that

The city cast  
Her people out upon her, and Antony,  
Enthroned i’ th’ market-place, did sit alone,  
Whistling to th’ air, which but for vacancy  
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,  
And made a gap in nature. (2.2.20–5)

What is this power that induces the otherwise plain-spoken Roman soldier to describe air yearning to rush forth and drink in the sights? What force drives the people to abandon the already enthroned Antony to a dangerous vacuum, to swarm the barge, which only *resembles* a burnished throne, and throng the wild banks of the river in a manner that makes the market a dull alternative?

The spectre of mass enchantment suggests that this force is charisma: the not entirely legitimate gift of grace associated, since Max Weber, with political authority. Like other Shakespearian accounts of charismatic performance, from the ‘new-made King’ Bolingbroke’s entry to London in *Richard II* (5.2.45), to Coriolanus’s triumphal return to Rome, the power Enobarbus describes is both focused and barely contained.<sup>2</sup> Unlike other such accounts, however, the character at its centre is female. Some of the most virtuosic charismatic performances in the canon are adduced to Cleopatra, yet she tends to be overlooked in this respect.<sup>3</sup> This is due, perhaps, to the frustrating opacity for which even her most admiring commentators feel compelled to apologize.<sup>4</sup> We do not

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Life of Marcus Antonius’, in *Plutarch’s Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans Englished by Sir Thomas North, Anno (1579)*, vol. 6 (New York, 1967), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Richard II*, 5.2.7–21; *Coriolanus*, 2.1.202–18. Studies of charisma in Shakespeare tend to focus on the tragedies and histories. One exception is Richard Burt’s ‘Charisma, Coercion, and Comic Form in *The Taming of the Shrew*’, *Criticism*, 26 (1984), 295–311.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael Falco’s chapter in *Charismatic Authority in Early Modern English Tragedy* (Baltimore, MD, 2000) is one exception, although it extends a familiar assumption that Cleopatra’s charisma is significantly more erotic and therefore less political than the male variety (pp. 172, 178).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Barbara Bono concedes to critical complaints that ‘her motives are never completely clear’ (*Literary Transvaluation: From Virgilian Epic to Shakespearian Tragicomedie* (Berkeley, CA, 1984), p. 184), while Sara Munson Deats notes that even Cleopatra’s admirers tend to treat her ‘as an archetype and emblem, rather than a complex,

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know Cleopatra's motives, or whether to attribute her performances to impulse or design, because she lacks the soliloquies charismatic characters usually employ to interpret their own actions.

This absence is usually attributed to Shakespeare's ambivalence toward his sources, from Plutarch to the late Elizabeth Tudor, but what if Shakespeare maintains our distance strategically, in order to foreground the technique and effects of charismatic political theatre?<sup>5</sup> If *Antony and Cleopatra* extends a meditation on charisma, seen as early as *1 Henry VI*, perhaps our distance from the queen is a kind of proto-Brechtian countermeasure to the fog of identification. Similarly, the focus on a female character tends to foreground charisma's *function* as an extraordinary politics that operates *beside* normative (patriarchal) politics, for being queen in this period does not automatically confer the degree of authority Cleopatra wields. It is charisma, as much as the Roman order she adapts, that baits her political angling.

This chapter posits *Antony and Cleopatra* as, in part, Shakespeare's exploration of how charisma works. Focusing on a scenario,<sup>6</sup> or set-piece, of regal femininity which links Cleopatra to Elizabeth I, Shakespeare reveals a dialectic of play that renders the imaginative space of charismatic performance transformative for queens and commoners alike. I explore the latter potential especially in the second half of this study, where I demonstrate how the charismatic performances of even non-elite Quaker women foster a collective expansion of the possible. Quaker women's success, like Elizabeth's, confirms what *Antony and Cleopatra* suggests: that charisma permits the disruption of norms because it is based on the collaborative exchanges of performance.<sup>7</sup> Charisma enchants not as a by-product of delusional mass submission but, on the contrary, because it articulates and materializes communal aspirations.

To prepare for the above analyses, the section that follows suggests where extant theories of charisma remain useful, and where they might be revised to account more satisfactorily for the seemingly intractable contradictions apparent in the

critical literature. By approaching charisma as a type of deep play, I naturalize what is popularly pathologized, and recover the communal, creative potential Shakespeare seems to intuit.

### ENCHANTED STAGES

Charisma, like performance, has a long history of exercising its best students' capacity for definition. We find works that discuss something like charisma as early as Plato's *Republic*, and premodern meditations from Longinus to Bacon raise versions of the questions that continue to vex modern commentary:<sup>8</sup> is charisma a psychological or a social phenomenon? Is it the personal quality of

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interiorized character' (*Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays* (New York, 2005), p. 17).

<sup>5</sup> Arguing that the death of Elizabeth I is the 'precondition' for the play, Katherine Eggert revisits key studies of the resemblance between the two queens in *Showing Like a Queen: Female Authority and Literary Experiment in Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton* (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 132–4. For a list of historical incidents on which comparisons are typically drawn, see Helen Morris, 'Queen Elizabeth I "Shadowed" in *Cleopatra*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 32 (1969), 271–8; pp. 271–2.

<sup>6</sup> I borrow 'scenario' from performance theorist Diana Taylor to denote the 'formulaic structures' of repeatable behaviour that inform social roles (*The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC, 2003), pp. 19–28). Scenarios make up the larger 'repertoire' by which we transfer cultural knowledge in ways that exceed the 'archive' of written, built or filmed records. The repertoire includes 'gestures, orality, movement, dance, [and] singing' (p. 37).

<sup>7</sup> I argue that charisma draws on the dynamic of performance, or 'theatricality', discussed shortly. For an overview of debates around these terms, see Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, 'Theatricality: An Introduction', in *Theatricality*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 1–39. Both a cognitive operation and a social relation, what I term 'performance' is closest to Josette Féral's 'theatricality' ('Foreword', *SubStance*, 31, special issue 'Theatricality' (2002), 3–13).

<sup>8</sup> Dionysius Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. Stephen Halliwell, Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 162; *Francis Bacon: The Major Works including New Atlantis and the Essays*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 1996), p. 445. Early modern theorists include Castiglione, Machiavelli and Bacon.

an exceptional individual or mass delusion? Is its nature primarily religious or political? Does it thwart or stimulate critical thought?<sup>9</sup> To begin to think through these apparent contradictions, I start by noting that some of the most nuanced insights still belong to Weber, charisma's first and best-known modern investigator.

Weber's initial theory of charisma is instructive, not only for its resistance to the above dichotomies, but also for the political implications of its history of revision. Weber's emphasis in his final years seems to have influenced most readers to overlook the importance of reception in the early version of charisma in *Economy and Society*, where it is not so clearly a personal power.<sup>10</sup> The charismatic leader appears to be 'endowed with supernatural [or] superhuman' qualities. Yet, as Weber insists, these attributes are merely 'thought of' as the basis for power. In fact, charisma resides in the 'recognition' its name designates as *charis* – a 'gift of grace', which extends *not* from the Christian deity but from the many 'subject to charismatic authority'. Thus, while charisma describes an authority that operates 'outside the realm of everyday routine and the profane sphere', its power comes, importantly, from below, making charisma communitarian.<sup>11</sup>

This complex, yet underdeveloped version of Weberian charisma has not gone entirely unrecognized.<sup>12</sup> Most relevant to present purposes is political theorist Andreas Kalyvas's inclusion of Weber's early thinking in a 'politics of the extraordinary', in which Weberian charisma, refined by Schmitt's 'constituent power' and Arendt's 'new beginnings', is identified as the force that allows radical, democratic mobilizations to redefine the content and aims of community.<sup>13</sup> For Kalyvas, Weber's abandonment of charisma's collective power after 1913 in all but his writing on religion speaks to his growing distrust of the multitude. His work with the Weimar Republic and the precipitous rise of National Socialism convinced Weber of charisma's danger. In its ability to move people to overturn not just the legal and bureaucratic machinery of state but also the perception of reality itself, charisma could empower demagogues to act on a people's darkest fantasies. Weber's

response was to focus his political writing on normative bureaucratic and juridical politics, against which charismatic movements could be delegitimized as a threat to political stability, a tool for Caesarian domination.<sup>14</sup> From this vantage point, the shift in Weber's thought appears not as the revision of a fundamentally flawed analysis but as a (perhaps) paternalistic response to the perceived threat of abuse.

It is precisely charisma's collective capacity to shape the world, socially and materially, that draws Kalyvas, like Bourdieu before him, to revisit

<sup>9</sup> The best-known example of the first question is Clifford Geertz's complaint about reducing Weber to either psychological or sociological terms; see 'Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in *Culture and its Creators: Essays in Honor of Edward Shils*, ed. Joseph Ben-David and Terry Nichols Clark (Chicago, 1977), 150–71; pp. 50–1. C. Stephen Jaeger adopts an admirably mixed approach in *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime* (Philadelphia, 2012), but with interests that are more aesthetic and modernist than mine. The second question concerns what Falco calls the 'central paradox' of early modern tragedy: the clash between group ideal and charismatic leader's individuality (*Charismatic Authority*, p. 1). The question of charisma's religious or political basis seems unnecessarily exclusive to Andreas Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge, 2008). On the final question of charisma and critical thinking is where I depart from all here but Kalyvas.

<sup>10</sup> Among those who read charisma as a personality trait that inspires primitive, religious frenzy, are Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (New York, 1974), pp. 72–94, and Luciano Cavalli, 'Charisma and Twentieth-Century Politics', in *Max Weber: Rationality and Modernity*, ed. Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (London, 1987), pp. 317–33; p. 318.

<sup>11</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (1921), in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York, 1947), pp. 359–61. The italics in the quotation are mine.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Pierre Bourdieu's sparse but trenchant comments in *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, 1991) and *In other Words: Essays Towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Stanford, CA, 1990).

<sup>13</sup> Kalyvas, *Democracy*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 1119, 154.

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Weber's early work.<sup>15</sup> My interest in the mechanics of performance makes my approach somewhat different. Specifically, I want to press Weber's insight that the way charisma shapes communities 'from within', transforming their symbolic and ethical foundations, begins with 'a subjective or internal reorientation' of the regulatory fictions that frame the world.<sup>16</sup>

First, we need to take seriously Weber's description of the 'magical' sensation of the 'gift of grace', and consider it in terms of the exchanges that connect individuals, creating groups. Second, we need to recognize that the analytical method of focusing on either a charismatic leader or a follower imposes a narrow fixity that is at odds with what is a dynamic, dialectical process. What is required, I suggest, is an approach specifically attuned to interpersonal dynamics and the effect of repeated events; a method that posits continuity between the mundane interactions which are its usual study, and heightened religious or aesthetic experience.

On the basis of his clinical observations of children, D. W. Winnicott noted that the 'play' that first occurs between a child and its primary caregiver lays the groundwork for 'what will always be important' in adult life, namely, the imaginative work at the heart of cultural experiences, from art to religion.<sup>17</sup> The 'transitional space' created during play is neither 'inner psychic reality' nor 'external world', so actions that transpire there are invested with dream meaning and feeling. This sensation intensifies when an other, perceived as sharing transitional space, interacts through an object as solid as a security blanket or as fleeting as a smile, in a way that seems to anticipate or mirror the child's desires.<sup>18</sup> Play becomes truly social when the (m)other begins to introduce ideas of her own into the game, rupturing narcissistic omnipotence with the 'to and fro' of reciprocal work, the unpredictable excitement of being *with*. Coaxed to accommodate new objects and ideas, the child learns to tolerate the frustration of compromise. Through the repetition of such play, s/he discovers that objects in transitional space, including the other, are trustworthily responsive

but also 'the not-me' that establishes a sense of reality.<sup>19</sup> Play satisfies most profoundly when tension is maintained between the enchanted internal world and the hardy external one, bridging the real and the phantasmal. This accounts for Weber's magic, a sensation subsequent social scientists have associated with both religious and political enthusiasm.

Weber also underscores the importance of a dialectic between the mirroring and rupture of convention when he notes: 'every charismatic authority subscribe[s] to the proposition, "It is written . . . but I say unto you . . ."'<sup>20</sup> Once we affirm a shared tradition, our concession to the other's novel idea ('I say unto you') may create affective bonds that put us 'beside ourselves'.<sup>21</sup> As part of a collective, we may then forge, as in Artaud's theatre, 'the chain between what is and what is not, between the virtuality of the possible and what already exists in materialised nature'.<sup>22</sup> Play, then, is the blueprint for theatrical performance and collaborative politics, actions initiated, like good theatre, by our initial recognition – the gift of attention with which we grace an other.

Charisma's to and fro motility reveals the limitation of approaches that fixate on a single element: actor or participant, mirror or rupture. Our play

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<sup>15</sup> Kalyvas, *Democracy*, pp. 24–5; Bourdieu, like Kalyvas, reads charisma as dialogic, between individual and group (*Language and Symbolic Power*, p. 129).

<sup>16</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 1116, 363.

<sup>17</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London, 1971), pp. 12, 51. Féral also adapts Winnicott's transitional space as the cognitive 'framing' of quotidian space that initiates theatrical experience ('Theatricality', p. 98).

<sup>18</sup> Winnicott, *Playing*, pp. 111–17. This magic also occurs in solo play with a 'transitional object', like the famed security blanket (p. 233).

<sup>19</sup> Winnicott, *Playing*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>20</sup> Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 361, 755.

<sup>21</sup> Judith Butler's communitarian politics urge a decentring of the self through emotions that 'bind us to others, transport us, undo us, implicate us in lives that are not our own' (*Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York, 2004), p. 25).

<sup>22</sup> Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York, 1958), p. 27.

model resists narrowing charisma to a characteristic like charm by locating its suprarational effects in the exchange of conventional symbols and allusions: a repertoire of cultural knowledge. As the primal scene for communal experience, play locates rupture within a healthy range of social activity. This seems important given the tendency to pathologize charisma as mass enthrallment. It is, ostensibly, this peril that motivates the last of the dichotomous questions with which I opened this section: whether charisma fosters or suppresses critical thinking. This question, like those before it, seeks to freeze a process whose contours unfold only over time. Is there a *moment* in the oscillation of this dialectic that ‘uncouples the critical sense, [and] overrides judgment . . . lessen[ing] individual will’, as many contend?<sup>23</sup> Certainly. This is Longinus’s lightning bolt of sublimity, the psychic blow that shatters our composure. But while charisma may temporarily arrest our critical faculties, it ultimately stimulates them.

Rather than make this case through more abstract exposition, I want to return to Enobarbus’s Act 2 attempt to convey to Maecenas and Agrippa how the sight of Cleopatra ‘beggared all description’ (2.2.205). The trope of ineffability is familiar period shorthand for the shock of encounter, yet Enobarbus’s description of her ‘O’er-picturing that Venus where we see / The fancy outwork nature’ (207–8) forecloses the possibility of mere platitude. The painting alluded to is Apelles’s *Venus Anadyomene*, which Shakespeare knew through Pliny – an image Enobarbus has internalized by the time he claims the queen exceeds its charms by as much as Apelles’s work was said to have surpassed its model. Notably, to relay the queen’s extraordinary effect, Enobarbus turns to the critical method of comparison and contrast.

A rupture Enobarbus does not relay, but one which some in Shakespeare’s audience can be expected to have known, is Cleopatra’s refusal to appear where she has been summoned. As Linda Woodbridge reminds us, social situatedness is often literalized in this period, rendering where a person stands, walks or reclines something of an index of

their political power.<sup>24</sup> It is significant, therefore, that Cleopatra appears not in the Tarsian square where Antony expects to upbraid her for aiding Cassius and Brutus against Caesar, but on the river. Nor does she sit contritely, but lolls amidst symbols that move Enobarbus and others to recognize her Cytherean qualities. In return for bracketing off the Cydnus as enchanted space, Enobarbus seems to see gold burn on the water, masochistic waves trail after oars that beat them, lovesick winds flock to the sails, and tackle tumesce in ‘flower-soft hands’ (2.2.217). This is no unmediated utterance of astonishment but an experience reconstructed in tranquility. The account contains as many similes, leaving room for doubt – her gentlewomen are ‘like the Nereides’ (213) – as transformative metaphors, revealing the vicissitudes of Enobarbus’s judgement.

The anecdote moves Agrippa to recall how Cleopatra charmed the previous Caesar to forgo war for love, a memory which, in turn, elicits this peculiar recollection:

ENOBARBUS. I saw her once  
Hop forty paces through the public street,  
And having lost her breath, she spoke and panted,  
That she did make defect perfection,  
And breathless, pour breath forth. (2.2.235–9)

Those familiar with Venus’s gait in *The Aeneid*, or with the many early modern echoes wherein aristocratic women are mistaken for goddesses, recognize how Cleopatra ruptures convention. Significantly, she impresses not by walking like a goddess but by bringing off a gait which Enobarbus’s tone suggests ill suits most ladies. The queen who can out-Venus Venus turns out to be the one who can make the ‘vilest things / Become themselves in her’ (244–5). To understand

<sup>23</sup> Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Woodbridge discusses place and mobility in ‘Imposters, Monsters, and Spies: What Rogue Literature can Tell us about Early Modern Subjectivity’, *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 9, special issue ‘Interactive Early Modern Literary Studies Dialogues’ (2002), <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/iemls/dialogues/01/woodbridge.html>, accessed 11 March 2016.

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how Cleopatra's breathless exertions redeem human imperfection, we need to recognize that this street performance, accrued to performances past, relies on juridical work done by one who grants Cleopatra the gift of grace to alter the repertoire of regal femininity. Enobarbus's critical recreation and affirmation of Cleopatra's hop makes hopping a queenly possibility ever after.

### SCENARIO I: THE ROYAL HAND

From here, I would like to turn quickly to the kind of account Shakespeare may have used to refresh his memory of Elizabeth Tudor after her death. Bernard Garter's festival book, *The ioyful receiving of the Queenes most excellent Maiestie* (1578), is not the most famous of such accounts, but offers a strong version of the type of political performance Shakespeare seems to work through in *Antony and Cleopatra* nearly thirty years later. Elizabeth was 45 years old when she first visited Norwich, by size and prosperity the 'second city' of the realm.<sup>25</sup> She had had twenty years to master the craft of political performance but, as some have noted, an East Anglian progress was by no means an assured success. The region was a hotbed for puritans and recusants. The patriarch of the most powerful local family, the Earl of Norfolk, had been executed only six years earlier for his part in the Ridolfi Plot, and several locals remained under suspicion. Complicating matters were the crown's marriage negotiations with the Catholic Duke of Anjou, the last to be entertained with the like level of seriousness. The French delegation was invited to accompany the queen and it was an open secret that Alençon himself was to meet the party and woo her in person.<sup>26</sup>

The political intricacies of this progress have raised speculation that the queen and her council hoped to play the expected staunch Protestantism of Norwich residents against Anjou's expressed demand to remain Catholic in marriage. Others have suggested that consideration of Anjou's proposal was itself a tactic designed to keep this younger brother of France out of the conflict between Lowland rebels and their Spanish

Catholic overlords.<sup>27</sup> I mention these difficulties to emphasize the highly charged nature of such events, and the conflicting interests of those involved. Elizabeth's ultimately successful use of political performance is not, to my mind, diminished by acknowledging with critics like William Leahy that even 'propagandistic' accounts like Garter's show traces of disunity.<sup>28</sup> Charisma is unlikely ever to have been universally overwhelming.

In the tradition of festival books, Garter captures the splendour of the progress's entry. We are treated to the cheers of the citizens and the richly appointed procession of city fathers before the 'terrestriall paradise' of streets beautified with the queen's colours and insignia.<sup>29</sup> The mutual displays of affection between Elizabeth and her people are quasi-conventional since Mulcaster's pre-coronation book, but given that moments of apparent monarchical improvisation appear in stories by ambassadors disinclined to flatter England, this feature seems more than conventional. At the first pageant, in which adult and child performers showcased the city's manufacture of woollen fabrics, from taffeta to 'Tuft Mockado', Elizabeth stepped close and 'particularlye viewed' the spinning and weaving. She heard the boy

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<sup>25</sup> B[ernard] G[arter], *The ioyfull receyuing of the Queenes most excellent Maiestie into hir Highnesse citie of Norwiche* (London, 1578), STC (2nd edn), 11627, title page. For historical context, see Zillah Dovey's *An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia, 1578* (Madison, WI, 1996).

<sup>26</sup> Dovey, *Progress*, p. 62.

<sup>27</sup> *Elizabeth I and her Age*, ed. Susan M. Felch and Donald V. Stump (New York, 2009), p. 238; and Dovey, *Progress*, p. 16.

<sup>28</sup> William Leahy, *Elizabethan Triumphal Processions* (Aldershot, 2005), is the most provocative of a number of studies, like *Dissing Elizabeth: Negative Representations of Gloriana*, ed. Julia Walker (Durham, NC, 1998), that problematize the cult of Elizabeth. Leahy's admonition against taking encomiastic work at face value is salubrious, but his claim that certain spectators' failure to be 'interpellated by [Elizabeth's] spectacular presence' signifies a 'failure' of performance is less convincing, not least because it misreads Althusser, for whom there are always some individuals who do *not* respond to the hail (pp. 86, 90).

<sup>29</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sig. A2v.



representing the Commonwealth of Norwich, and gave ‘great thanks’ to the people.<sup>30</sup> While this set the tone for her responsiveness, a speech later that week moved her to call the French and ‘divers English Lords’ to her side, where she ‘willed them to harken, and she herselfe was very attentive, even untill the end therof’.<sup>31</sup>

This oration, by Master Stephen Limbert of the grammar school, was probably delivered off schedule, as he seemed flustered at greeting her, after her party was rained out of an excursion to Mount Surrey. ‘[H]ir Maiestie drewe neare unto him and, thinking him fearfull, saide graciously unto him: “Bee not afeared”. He answered hir againe in English: “I thanke your Maiestie, for your good encouragement”, and then with good courage entred into [his] oration.’<sup>32</sup> The main conceit of Limbert’s speech compared Elizabeth to the life-giving Nile, source of the enriching rivers of ‘godlynesse, justice, [and] humilitie’. He praised her for keeping England out of the wars, and extolled her addition of land to the city’s hospital for the poor, insisting that if she could see the ‘hidden’ ‘creckes’ of the citizens’ minds, she would find infinite good will in those ‘narrow straightes’.<sup>33</sup> Thanking the schoolmaster, the queen replied, ‘It is the best that ever I heard, you shal haue my hande’, and she ‘pulled off hir gloue, and gaue him hir hand to kisse’. She then returned immediately to her lodgings, appearing no more that evening, save to inquire after Limbert’s name. She left the city on Friday with the ‘water standing in her eies’.<sup>34</sup>

Garter’s account illustrates both the specular and disruptive moments of charismatic performance. The decorations and pageants reflect the inherited world, reproducing royal iconography: Elizabeth as justice-dealing biblical heroine, font of all virtue, blended Tudor rose. The queen, in her performance of royal but attentive affect, mirrors, in turn, the people’s hopes. For Jonathan Goldberg, accounts like Norwich demonstrate how Elizabeth made ordinary people her ‘co-partners’ in a ‘mutual exchange of affective gifts’.<sup>35</sup> What he implies, and what accounts like Garter’s suggest, is that a not inconsiderable part of her charisma

derived from her performance of ideal reception. She offers gestic and verbal feedback, and forces auditor roles upon those accustomed to being the centre of attention.

Playing to the city’s expectations, Elizabeth embodies the role of Norwich’s high sovereign, mirroring through approval their production of her charismatic authority. She also confirms Norwich’s ego ideal: industrious Protestant masters of manufacturing and commerce. Limbert, who represents Everycitizen in his oration, is seen loving and being loved by the monarch, thanking and being thanked by one whose charismatic presence, ‘creates the illusion of full participation in a higher kind of life’.<sup>36</sup> Both psychoanalytic and political theorists tell us that this relational recognition of self in the other transforms from the inside out, linking individuals to community. In Norwich and *as* Norwich, Limbert appears as the object that satisfies the queen’s desire because for the luminous moment of the kiss, he *is* that object.

Yet, in offering her hand to a commoner, a favour not granted to either the mayor or other Norwich dignitaries, Elizabeth alters the frame of convention, opening the scene to new possibilities for action and identification. The hand-kiss ruptures the reflection of her entry in a moment that blurs boundaries between participant and player, between working port city and its distant, dazzling other, the royal court, as the two converge at the city gate. Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones remind us that extension of the naked hand in early modern courtly etiquette was a mark of great favour, especially when emphasized by the erotic gesture of pulling off the glove.<sup>37</sup> Indeed,

<sup>30</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sig. B7. <sup>31</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sig. Ev.

<sup>32</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sig. D2v. <sup>33</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sig. E1r.

<sup>34</sup> Garter, *ioyfull*, sigs. E1v and F1v.

<sup>35</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, MD, 1983), p. 29. Unlike James I, Elizabeth ‘provided a mirror of the people’s hopes and wishes in her attentiveness to the pageants’ (p. 30).

<sup>36</sup> Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, ‘Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe’, *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2001), 114–32; p. 124.

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this is how Shakespeare's Antony understands it in Act 3, when he orders Caesar's messenger whipped for his presumption to kiss that 'kingly seal' which a servant 'that will take rewards' should 'shake' to look upon (3.13.126, 124, 141). Given Elizabeth's expertise in 'the silent language of the hand', it seems not unreasonable to suppose that for Limbert's oration, which reflects Elizabeth *Regina's* best self, she marks him with a public gesture with which he will likely be identified for the rest of his life.<sup>38</sup> Her charisma rubs off on those she touches, in much the same way the royal touch was believed to have healing powers that could pass even to coins.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, the gesture's reiteration of her 'stately stouping to the meanest sort' renews the charismatic bond through which Elizabeth, in part, receives her power.<sup>40</sup>

Moving from Garter's account to Shakespeare's more self-consciously fictionalized one reveals how the latter exposes the inner workings of the former. Focusing on two closely related scenes in the play, we find that, to produce the charismatic effect, the enchanting mirror image must be offered and accepted, but what Shakespeare suggests hundreds of years before Weber, is that charismatic political performance also requires a felicitous rupture that puts us beside ourselves, where new perspectives may be considered.

Like Limbert's oration, Act 2, Scene 5 revolves around a disruptive use of the royal hand. The scene opens in Cleopatra's court, where an eagerly awaited messenger has arrived from Rome. The queen greets him with the following statement of conditions: if he bears the good news that Antony is 'free and healthful', he will have gold and '[m]y bluest veins to kiss – a hand that kings / Have lipped, and trembled kissing' (2.5.38, 29–30). She also warns that for bad news, 'The gold I give thee will I melt and pour / Down thy ill-uttering throat' (33–4). Unfortunately for the honest messenger, the news he carries is of Antony's marriage to Octavia. Cleopatra strikes him, curses him and ignoring his pleas for 'patience' responds with more blows and increasingly hyperbolic threats (62). When she brandishes a knife, the messenger flees. Five scenes later, coaxed back into the royal

presence, the messenger has changed his tune. Pumped for information about Octavia, he asserts that the new bride 'creeps' rather than strides in 'majesty', that her face is 'round, even to faultiness', and that she possesses a forehead 'as low as she would wish it' (3.3.18, 30, 33). For this depiction, he is rewarded with praise, gold and the promise of future employment.

As Katherine Eggert and others have shown, scene 2.5 emphatically eroticizes the courtly gesture.<sup>41</sup> In this, it recalls the Petrarchan politics and mercurial caprice of the recently deceased monarch. By replacing the hand-kiss with a blow, and dilating the moment to imagine the after-effects of this rupture, Shakespeare reveals the potentiality at the core of the performance. This enables us to make sense, retrospectively, of the political force of Elizabeth's theatrics at Norwich. I suggest that Cleopatra's blows violently, but no less literally, collapse the space between servant and queen, disrupting the hierarchy of ordinary politics to momentarily close social distance. We are made privy, through the intimacy of this problematic variety of touch, to how rupture can liberate the commoner in the serious play of the charismatic relationship. Cleopatra's blows induce him to see a new possibility in the messenger function: invention rather than reportage. In the space deterritorialized by the slap, the creative servant may enchant with fictions about the rival Octavia's homeliness. And if he becomes, in this respect, no more than the 'common liar' (1.1.62) denounced

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<sup>38</sup> Mary Hazard, *Elizabethan Silent Language* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), p. 7. Hazard cites more examples of the queen's expert deployment of this gesture, including her refusal to honour the anti-Protestant Bishop Bonner during her pre-coronation entry (pp. 7–8, 204).

<sup>39</sup> For Elizabeth's ambivalence toward the superstition of the curative royal touch, see Stephen Deng, *Coinage and State Formation in Early Modern English Literature* (New York, 2011), pp. 137–44.

<sup>40</sup> Sir John Hayward, *Annals of the First Four Years of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*, ed. John Bruce, Camden Society First Series, 7 (London, 1840), pp. 6–7.

<sup>41</sup> Eggert, *Showing Like a Queen*, pp. 133, 136.



by the Roman Demetrius at the play's beginning, it is not a role the play itself condemns.<sup>42</sup>

While the messenger revises his role, the enchanted space also frees the queen to become something other than royal Egypt – in this case an ordinary, jealous lover, competing with her rival. Shakespeare reveals that the queen's desire to rupture the messenger's reflection of impervious, regal femininity may be no less urgent than her servant's desire for her favour. On the contrary, Cleopatra's desire, as perceived by the messenger post-slap, becomes the *condition* of his transformation, from deliverer of news to a more valued gossip whose inventions are precisely what the queen deems 'fit for [the] business' (3.3.36) of keeping long-distance love alive.

#### AMBIGUOUS VISIBLES

I turn now to performers who substantiate the more radical implications of Shakespeare's meditation: that because transcendence of social norms derives from the serious play of a performance dialectic, charisma is ultimately communitarian and transformative even for the non-elite. Like queens, pre-Restoration Quaker women warrant their performance of charismatic authority through the reflection and revision of theological conventions already powerful in the cultural imaginary. Yet, lacking royal resources, Quakers patently reject status-based exceptionalism and embrace a scenario that allows for what social anthropologist Athena Athanasiou calls 'plural performativity', socially transformative performance inextricable from the collective.<sup>43</sup> To understand how this choice instrumentalizes performance which, in turn, allows Quaker women to rearticulate their political identities, we must know something about the doctrine which justifies this.

Weber observed that charismatic social movements target the emancipatory aspirations of their audience.<sup>44</sup> This was certainly true of Quakerism. Fundamental to what drew women in particular – Quakers' public activism, eschewal of social stratification and deeply affective spirituality – was the doctrine of Inner Light. Extending earlier Protestant iterations of the 'light of conscience',

Quakers believed themselves recipients of 'the light of Christ', a divine power that induced the 'quaking' of their group's moniker, and offered the chance for a prelapsarian 'perfection' unimaginable from the vantage point of the Calvinist doctrine of depravity.<sup>45</sup> This internal Christ called women as readily as men to demonstrate obedience, whether it meant travelling to distant corners of the world, organizing petitions or donning sackcloth and ashes as a sign of the Lord's immanent wrath.

Consequently, women were at the forefront of the movement from its inception in the unusually tolerant atmosphere following the abolition of the English prelacy in 1642. The Inner Light provided a basis for Quakers' radical assertion of a universal spiritual equality that rendered all social difference 'outward' form, and all co-religionists Friends.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, they eschewed all '*fashion[s] of the world*' that sought to place man above man: all forms of 'honour which is from below'.<sup>47</sup> Hailing

<sup>42</sup> See Janet Adelman's influential argument that characters' presentation of competing accounts blurs the hard distinctions audiences expect between truth and fiction (*The Common Liar: An Essay on 'Antony and Cleopatra'* (New Haven, CT, 1973), p. 30).

<sup>43</sup> Athena Athanasiou defines plural performativity as occurring when 'the collective demand [that] emerges from . . . singular histories, becomes something plural' without effacing the 'personal and the singular' (*Dispossession: The Performative in the Political*, Judith Butler, *Conversations with Athena Athanasiou* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 157).

<sup>44</sup> Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston, MA, 1993), p. 102.

<sup>45</sup> Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences* (University Park, PA, 2011), stresses the cross-pollination and inter-group movement between Familists, Anabaptists, Quakers, etc., in the revolutionary era more than pioneering studies like William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1961). The name Quaker, like Puritan, began as a slur. Self-identifying as Children of Light, or Friends, Quakers eventually adopted the pejorative term as a badge of honour.

<sup>46</sup> Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA, 1992; repr. 1995), p. 157; Moore, *Light*, pp. 80–1.

<sup>47</sup> George Fox, *Some Principles of the Elect people of God who in scorn are called Quakers, for all people throughout all Christendome to read over, and thereby their own states to consider*, Library of the

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mostly from middling or serving-class backgrounds, and therefore amongst those most burdened by displays of deference, Quakers must have found adherence to inward truth almost immediately liberating. Their refusal to bow, use honorary titles, or replace 'thou' with the honorific 'you' when addressing superiors, contributed to their pre-Restoration reputation as troublemakers and disturbers of the peace.<sup>48</sup> 'Hat honour' became a trial of faith when hauled before authorities for vagrancy or disruption of church services, as often occurred. Mary Tompkins, ordered by a magistrate to remove her hat, swept it from her head and cast it to the ground. Stamping on it, she declared, 'See I have your honour under my feet'.<sup>49</sup> In one swift action, Tompkins seizes the common signifier of deference to literalize her contempt for it, then glosses her gesture to avoid misconstrual. The way outward things, or 'visibles', could mask inward truth was, for Quakers, an embodied conundrum from the start.

The notion, then, that the Quaker concern with inward things rendered the outward insignificant is an oversimplification.<sup>50</sup> Early Quakerism was not a *contemptus mundi* religion but sought, as Hugh Barbour writes, 'to transform the world, not to shut it out'.<sup>51</sup> Their apprehension of difference between spiritual and carnal forms allowed for something like a critical distance from discursive constructions of cultural institutions and the bodies these sought to control. The performance of 'signs and wonders' to legitimize their calling depended not on the 'transcendence' of materiality, but on its reinscription.<sup>52</sup> Detractors famously attacked the group's condemnation of conventional structures, from steeples to aristocratic fashions, but, if iconoclastic negation was all Quakers performed, the movement would have played itself out quickly. Instead, their ability to positively resignify the mundane in a way desirable to those outside the group lent them charisma and staying power.

### SCENARIO II: THE PROPHETIC SIGN

Like the female monarchs who interested Shakespeare, Quaker women cannily established

a protective conventional frame for their performances. Acts of 'prophecy', denoting not so much prognostication as 'biblical exegesis' and the calls to repentance issued by those summoned by God, fed cultural assumptions about feminine receptivity, self-sacrifice and unlettered wisdom.<sup>53</sup> It granted adepts authority as a form of spiritual exceptionalism. In this, Quaker women tapped a larger English tradition whose more spectacular examples include Margery Kemp, Anne Askew, the Holy Maid of Kent and Anna Trapnel.<sup>54</sup> The doctrine of the Inner Light, however, allowed Quaker women to position their exceptionalism more firmly within contemporary social conventions. Therefore, while Patricia Crawford is right to caution us not to conflate 'secular' with spiritual equality, the fact

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Society of Friends, London (hereafter LSF) (London, 1661), pp. 4–6.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas Underhill lists typical Quaker disturbances in *Hell Broke Loose: or An history of the Quakers both old and new*, LSF (London, 1660), pp. 30–2.

<sup>49</sup> George Bishope relays the incident in *New England judged, not by man's, but the spirit of the Lord: and the summe sealed up of New-England's persecutions*, LSF (London, 1661), p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> The contrast Kate Peters makes between spirit and flesh, for example, somewhat undermines her argument for print's central importance to the movement in *Print Culture and the Early Modern Quakers* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 2, 135. Similarly, Mack writes that Quaker women alienated themselves from their gender (*Visionary*, pp. 172–8).

<sup>51</sup> Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven, CT, 1964), p. 15. Most Quaker histories describe a shift from radical, quasi-democratic beginnings in Nottinghamshire, 1647, to a more sober, routinized organization after 1660. Ann Hughes reminds us, however, that the Quaker desire for respectability was always mediated by the 'living, more radical tradition' of their inception. 'Early Quakerism: A Historian's Afterword', in *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Thomas N. Corns and David Loewenstein (London, 1995), pp. 142–8; p. 147.

<sup>52</sup> Elaine Hobby, 'Prophecy, Enthusiasm, and Female Pamphleteers', in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 162–78; p. 167.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Carroll, 'Early Quakers and "Going naked as a sign"', *Quaker History*, 67 (1978), 69–87; p. 70.

<sup>54</sup> See Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (Suffolk, 1997).

is that 'prophecy' enlarged women's access to public roles, allowing ordinary women to occupy positions of leadership as travelling ministers, writers, agitators and administrators of funding and international events.<sup>55</sup>

For prophets who relied on the mystical Christ disseminated through his many-membered church, it was 'collective identity that mattered most'. They prized the intermittent dissolution of boundaries that isolated individuals from this unified body.<sup>56</sup> Prominent among these were the normative matrices of gender. The unusual 'fluidity of gender' in early Quakers has occasioned a significant amount of discussion, but evidence suggests that the Quaker understanding was more complex than the critical conclusion sometimes espoused that Quakers disavowed gender as a 'negative abstraction' without 'descriptive value for individual, sanctified women'.<sup>57</sup> It seems implausible, for example, to suppose seventeenth-century women believed they could 'circumvent traditional ideas about female inferiority' by simply performing masculinity.<sup>58</sup> On the contrary, Quaker women seem to have mirrored some gendered conventions in order to rupture others. Most did this not to elevate individual personality but to present their embodied activities, like those of their male counterparts, as the 'signs and wonders' Scripture extolled as the mark of true prophecy.<sup>59</sup>

It was widely known, for example, that Paul forbade women from speaking in church.<sup>60</sup> Yet, as one Quaker pamphlet defending female prophets explained, Quaker women, 'taught of God himself', 'who dwelleth in them, and walketh in them, and is their Teacher', demonstrated their obedience by proselytizing *wheresoever* moved to speak. Here, the wonder of the Inner Light suspends the Pauline proscription.<sup>61</sup> It is a rupture seen in practice nearly twenty years earlier, when Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole addressed 'the Priests and People of England' from their jail cell in Exeter. Exploiting the cultural convention equating women with weakness, Cotton and Cole claim the Pauline ban is 'not spoke only of a Female', but rather, 'it's *weakness* that is the Woman by the scriptures forbidden' to speak in

church.<sup>62</sup> Weakness, for early Quakers, was an overdependence on book learning: the type gained at university and typically used to silence women. 'Indeed', Cotton and Cole assure the priests responsible for their incarceration, 'you *yourselves* are the women that are forbidden to speak in the church'. Stripped of their usual tactics by the resignification of 'Woman' as academic vanity, the priests 'railed on us with filthy speeches', 'becom[ing] women'.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Cotton and Cole, authorized by the Inner Light, could wield 'the aggressive language of [male] Old Testament prophets' in church or other public spaces.<sup>64</sup>

This is clearly different from 'blending' 'sexual categories'.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the 'wonder[ous]' point of

<sup>55</sup> Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (New York, 1993), p. 161.

<sup>56</sup> Mack, *Visionary*, p. 20; Moore, *Light*, p. 155. For an argument that Quaker gendering was a harbinger for modern 'queer' identities, see A. G. Myles, 'Border Crossings: The Queer Erotics of Quakerism in Seventeenth-Century New England', in *Long Before Stonewall: Histories of Same-sex Sexuality in Early America*, ed. Thomas A. Foster (New York, 2007), pp. 114–43.

<sup>57</sup> Crawford, *Women and Religion*, p. 180; Mack, *Visionary*, pp. 173, 177.

<sup>58</sup> Hobby, 'Prophecy', p. 166.

<sup>59</sup> For example, 2 Corinthians 12: 12, in which Paul invokes the 'signes, and wonders' that legitimize his mission. Also John 4: 48, and Daniel 3: 32, in which Daniel 'declare[s] the signes and wonders, that the hie God hathe wrought toward me'. All biblical citations are from *The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison, WI, 1969).

<sup>60</sup> 'Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak' (1 Corinthians 14: 34–5).

<sup>61</sup> George Keith, *The Woman-Preacher of Samaria, a better preacher, and more sufficiently qualified to preach than any of the men-preachers of the man-made-ministry in these three nations*, LSF (London, 1674), p. 5. Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified* (1666) also defends female prophets, but I concur with those who find Fell 'more careful and conservative' than the prophets (Peters, *Print Culture*, p. 131).

<sup>62</sup> Priscilla Cotton and Mary Cole, *To the Priests and People we discharge our consciences, and give them warning*, LSF (London, 1655), pp. 6–7; italics mine.

<sup>63</sup> Cotton and Cole, *To the Priests*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>64</sup> Mack, *Visionary*, p. 187.

<sup>65</sup> Rachel Trubowitz, 'Female Preachers and Male Wives: Gender and Authority in Civil War England', in *Pamphlet*

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a 'sign' is often the way it reiterates a beholder's internalized norm, in order to revise it. The very difference between the spectacular signifier, say, Cleopatra's slap, and its apparent signified, the proffered queenly hand, encourages participants to develop, through the interpretive work we saw modelled by Shakespeare's spectators, a new, more personally relevant meaning. Quakers invoked certain attitudes about corporeal femininity to justify the extraordinary work they accomplished in the world. When the prophet Dewance Morey describes her preaching as the miraculous communication of 'a poor, despised Earthen Vessel' through whom the Lord has seen fit to speak, she brings gender and status to the fore to reveal herself a sign of the Lord's power to use even 'the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty'.<sup>66</sup> Echoing Jonah,<sup>67</sup> Morey exhorts the king to 'come down from his Throne, and sit in the Dust' with her and repent:

O, *England!* Thy warning has been doubled . . . for I have also been made to go [through] thy Streets of *London* in sackcloth with dust upon my head, and a rod in my hand for a Sign unto thee; proclaiming that dreadful and terrible Famine that is swiftly coming on upon thee from the God of Life.<sup>68</sup>

Female prophets in cities from Bristol to Bridgetown testified in the streets, fasted publicly and appeared in churches and before Parliament with the dishevelled hair, bare limbs and symbolically overdetermined props that bespoke the immanence of divine judgement.<sup>69</sup> Prophets like Morey, who stressed their aversion to becoming such 'wondering stock[s]',<sup>70</sup> gained the additional licence of reluctant obedience.

The scenario that put this protection most sorely to the test was the practice of going 'naked' 'as a sign'.<sup>71</sup> That 'naked' was ever full nudity has been contested; it may, rather, have meant to strip to one's shift, or go about in sackcloth, without other covering.<sup>72</sup> The scenario was modelled, again, on Old Testament prophets like Isaiah of 20: 3, who battles his aversion to going 'naked, & barefote thre yeres, as a signe & wondre vpon Egypt, & Ethiopia'.<sup>73</sup> To go 'naked at the word

of the Lord' was to divest oneself of all 'garments through which class and gender were made visible', to decry the bareness of professions and worldly prestige while delivering a clarion call to repent.<sup>74</sup> It was, in other words, a highly confrontational act in which the flouting of social conventions, especially for women, fed opponents' assertions that Quakers were 'the most immodest, obscene, people in the world'.<sup>75</sup> As such, going naked was a high-risk performance undertaken more frequently by men than women. For the latter, who appear not to have committed their thoughts about the experience to paper, we rely on accounts by supportive male co-religionists and scandalized enemies. What all make abundantly clear, is the knife's edge of convention upon which these performances turned.

Prophets explained that the impulse to go naked arose in the conscience, where it gnawed until one 'durst not withstand' it.<sup>76</sup> Once the prophet complied, accounts typically describe the great dread

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*Wars: Prose in the English Revolution*, ed. James Holstun (London, 1992), pp. 112–33; p. 119.

<sup>66</sup> Dewance Morey paraphrases 1 Corinthians 1: 27–8 in *A true and faithful WARNING from the Lord God, sounded through me, a poor despised Earthen Vessel, unto all the Inhabitants of England*, LSF (1665), p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Jonah 3: 6–9. <sup>68</sup> Morey, *True and faithful*, pp. 1, 5.

<sup>69</sup> For more on Quaker millenarianism and the use of props, from carrying lit torches at midday to smashing a pitcher at the door of Parliament to signify its immanent destruction, see Kenneth Carroll, 'Sackcloth and Ashes and Other Signs and Wonders', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 53 (1975), 314–25.

<sup>70</sup> William Simpson, *From one who was moved of the Lord God to go a sign among the priests & professors of the Prophets, Apostles, and Christs WORDS*, LSF (London, 1659), p. 8.

<sup>71</sup> Simpson, *From one who was moved*, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> Patricia Crawford and Laura Gowing, *Women's Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1999), p. 256.

<sup>73</sup> Isaiah 20: 3.

<sup>74</sup> Francis Howgill, *A Woe against the Magistrates, priests, and people of Kendall in the county of Westmorland* (London, 1654), LSF, p. 4. Stallybrass and Jones, *Renaissance Clothing*, p. 207.

<sup>75</sup> Underhill, *Hell Broke Loose*, p. 30.

<sup>76</sup> Simon Eccles, *Signes are from the Lord, to a People or Nation to forewarn them of some eminent Judgment near at hand* (London, 1663), LSF, p. 1.

that came over viewers. Reaction to this feeling could be aggressive, but Quakers turned this to their advantage by publishing narratives of patient ‘sufferings’ that generated public sympathy. These quasi-hagiographical stories contributed not inconsiderably, if Kate Peters is correct, to solidifying Quaker identity and encouraging the ‘growth of a successful, national movement’.<sup>77</sup> One well-known account by Quaker leader Richard Hubberthorne concerns ‘little Elizabeth Fletcher’ and her companion, Elizabeth Leavens, who were the first to evangelize Oxford between 1653 and 1655. The young women walked together in the apostolic manner, through ‘the streets, in the market-place, in the synagogues, and in the colledges’. And despite the fact that

Elizabeth Fletcher was a very modest, grave young woman, yet Contrary to her owne will or inclination, in obedience to the Lord, [she] went naked through the Streets of that City, as a sign against the Hippocritical profession they then made there, being then Presbyterians & Independents, which profession she told them the Lord would strip them of, so that their Nakedness should Appear, which shortly after ye return of King Charles the 2nd, was fulfilled upon them, they being turned out or made Hippocritically to Conforme.<sup>78</sup>

The reaction of some Oxford students and residents was remarkably brutal, perhaps because in the notoriously homosocial university milieu, two young women wandering ‘freely’ to ‘declare against sin and ungodliness’ were unable to make the conventions they tapped legible.<sup>79</sup> Slight and ‘naked’ in her shift, with her hair down, feet and legs bare, the scenario 19-year-old Fletcher evoked for university boys was probably not the Old Testament prophet. She may, rather, have embodied the sartorial shorthand of theatre wherein a woman in her smock was ‘simultaneously sexualized and made vulnerable’.<sup>80</sup> Accompanied by the lower-born Leavens, who held Fletcher’s clothing, the two may have brought to mind a young gentlewoman and her maid at bedtime. The difference was that Fletcher vigorously castigated observers to leave off their ‘pride, covetousness, lust, and all uncleanness’.<sup>81</sup> The powerfully

erotic symbolism of a young woman in her smock combined with a shaming message toward those either accustomed to occupying, or being trained to occupy, authoritative roles, may have impaired the intended mirroring, without which rupture proves intolerable.

Had Fletcher gone naked through a more urban area, like the east end of London, which saw a significant amount of prophetic activity in those years, she might have fared better.<sup>82</sup> A cursory glance at Ephraim Pagitt’s anatomy of ‘Sects’ in his 1654 pamphlet, *Heresiography or a Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries Spring up in these Latter times*, gives a sense of the apparent ubiquity of female prophets in the ferment of London’s relative religious freedom.<sup>83</sup> In this context, the repetition of prophetic acts stabilized allusive links to the biblical scenario. Going naked in London may have incurred arrest, followed by whipping or imprisonment, but it seldom met with the level of rough justice Fletcher and Leavens experienced in Oxford.

The women were ‘mocked, buffeted and shamefully used, being tied together at *Johns* Colledge and pumped [held under a water pump with their mouths forced open until they nearly drowned], and kicked and buffeted, and thrust into a pool called “Giles” pool’. Hauled before the city magistrates and vice chancellor of the university, the girls were condemned to be ‘soundly whipped’ out of town as vagabonds.<sup>84</sup> Elizabeth Fletcher never recovered from the ‘cruel usage’ that included

<sup>77</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, pp. 9–10.

<sup>78</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Stallybrass and Jones, *Renaissance Clothing*, p. 213.

<sup>81</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, p. 2.

<sup>82</sup> The intense activity around one of the first Quaker meeting houses (1656) is memorialized today in the name Quaker Street, in the Spitalfields neighbourhood.

<sup>83</sup> Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography or A description of the hereticks and sectaries of these latter times . . .*, Early English Books 946 (London, 1547), p. 17. See Mack’s chart of female prophets around London’s east end in *Visionary*, pp. 416–24.

<sup>84</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, pp. 2–3, 10.



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being dashed down onto a gravestone. She died of her injuries soon afterwards.<sup>85</sup>

The standards by which I cite the Fletcher and Leavens episode as an example of successful charismatic performance probably require clarification. If we are to believe Hubberthorne, 'there was many in the City that have so much of the Light of Christ made manifest in them, as to acknowledge them [Fletcher and Leavens] to be servants of the Living God, and to own them in their sufferings, and to confess the appearance of Christ in them before men, and in love did accompany them out of the City, and did own them in their persecution'.<sup>86</sup> In other words, some people at one of the key training centres of orthodox English clergy were converted, or 'convinced' in Quaker parlance, by Fletcher and Leavens's performance. Where it failed as Old Testament prophecy, it succeeded as martyrdom. Warning Oxford 'thy desolation is coming', Hubberthorne exhorts the community to submit to the Inner Light, mend their ways and stop persecuting 'the saints'.<sup>87</sup> Fletcher and Leavens also opened the way for other prophets, like Jane Whitehead who, during her far less violent mission to Oxford was also 'confirm[ed] of many in the truth'.<sup>88</sup> On a smaller scale, Elizabeth Leavens, despite very humble origins, went on to become a religious leader in her own right. Sent to head a border mission in Wales, she met and married Thomas Holme, another Quaker prophet who had gone naked as a sign earlier in his career. The two were made pastoral overseers of Wales.<sup>89</sup>

If the success of charisma is measured by the performer's convincement of others, and impact on 'the body politic and society at large', Quakers were, on the whole, highly successful.<sup>90</sup> Evidence of female prophets' efficacy in initiating conversions and instantiating new communities abounds. Elaine Huber confirms an earlier historian's estimate that by 1690 there were some 60,000 English Friends, 'or one out of every 130 persons then living in England' was a Quaker.<sup>91</sup> It is also worth noting that, of the unprecedented abundance of female-authored texts in the period, a 'disproportionate share' were written by Quakers. An estimated 20 per cent of all seventeenth-century women's

publications were Quaker-authored.<sup>92</sup> Peter's speculation that print may have been used to normalize the 'actual presence of preaching women' becomes more intriguing in light of the fact that there were even more female prophets than writers (220 prophets between 1640 and 1660), most of whom did not publish.<sup>93</sup> Or did they?

In his journal, the Quaker leader, George Fox, declared that there were three legitimate ways to 'publish the truth': 'by word, by writing and by signs'.<sup>94</sup> Here is Fox, decades after Quakers had distanced themselves from their more ecstatic beginnings, putting two *performed* modes of publishing on a par with printing. His words confirm my sense that to focus *only* on the archive of written texts, without considering the repertoire they attempt to capture and elucidate, is to exclude from analysis not only a crucial technique of Quaker publishing, but also a possible key to how ordinary women, and by extension, other marginalized people, used charismatic performance to carve out leadership roles for themselves, reconfiguring political relations.

Admittedly, those who endeavour to read the Quaker repertoire face not only the infamous ephemerality of performance, but the fragmentary, second- or even third-hand nature of accounts

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<sup>85</sup> Huber, 'A Woman Must Not Speak', p. 164; Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, p. 4.

<sup>86</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, p. 4.

<sup>87</sup> Hubberthorne, *True Testimony*, pp. 2, 10.

<sup>88</sup> Theophila Townsend, *A Testimony concerning the life and death of Jane Whitehead, that Faithful Servant and Hand-maid of the Lord . . .*, LSF (London, 1576), p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> Barbour, *Quakers in Puritan England*, p. 133; Moore, *Light*, pp. 32, 136.

<sup>90</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, pp. 1, 10; Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Huber, 'A Woman Must Not Speak', pp. 164, 154.

<sup>92</sup> Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings, 1600–1700', in *Women in English Society: 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London, 1985), p. 213. That so much writing survives is partly attributable to the seventeenth-century Quaker practice of preserving two copies of every Quaker-related document since the movement's beginning.

<sup>93</sup> Peters, *Print Culture*, p. 150; Mack, 'Women as Prophets', p. 24.

<sup>94</sup> *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (Cambridge, 1952), p. 407.



imbued with passionate pro- or anti-Quaker sentiment. These issues cause some historians to balk at the Friends' archive, citing the way propaganda muddies events.<sup>95</sup> But in thinking about charisma, historical accuracy seems, finally, less important than *reception* – 'the emotional response of the reader or viewer'.<sup>96</sup> What Quaker performances affirm, with Shakespeare, is that charisma beguiles not because it forces a mass surrender of plebeian will but, on the contrary, because its emancipatory promise speaks to participants across the social spectrum, embodying wishes and reshaping norms to the community's will.

This is why Egyptian improvisation ultimately co-opts Roman triumph, with the latter's staid reproduction of triumphs past.<sup>97</sup> This is why, even if Shakespeare can no more conceive of a stable charisma than Weber, he nevertheless celebrates Cleopatra's charisma at the play's end. In real time, Caesar dominates the scene, reacting to news that the queen's suicide has thwarted his plan to display her in his spectacular reentry to Rome. Yet, his final command reduces him to a choric function:

High events as these  
Strike those that make them, and their story is  
No less in pity than his glory which  
Brought them to be lamented. Our army shall  
In solemn show attend this funeral,  
And then to Rome. Come, Dolabella, see  
High order in this great solemnity. (5.2.354–60)

Caesar becomes, here, the gazed-upon participant in Cleopatra's procession, and not, as he intended, the other way around. Nor is it entirely clear what moves the troops more: Caesar's orders or the dead queen's 'strong toil of grace' (342). Her visage, which now 'looks like sleep, / As she would catch another Antony' (340–1), disrupts space-time, blurring the line between past and present as Caesar echoes Enobarbus's account of her arrival on Cydnus where, by being precisely where she was not supposed to be, Cleopatra recursively justified the sovereignty her performance asserted. In the end, Caesar adds to Cleopatra's extraordinary politics by projecting her into the anagogical space of 'glory', where she continues to feed the social imaginary from whence she drew.

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<sup>95</sup> Peters discusses historians' misgivings about the reliability of these sources in *Print Culture*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>96</sup> Jaeger, *Enchantment*, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> I follow here the many who read Cleopatra's finale as a victory. Heather James, for example, sees an Isis-like apotheosis in 'The Politics of Display and the Anamorphic Subjects of *Antony and Cleopatra*', in *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies*, ed. Susanne Wofford (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1996), pp. 208–34, while Linda Woodbridge describes how Cleopatra outgames Caesar in "'He beats thee 'gainst the odds': Gambling, Risk Management and *Antony and Cleopatra*", in *Antony and Cleopatra: New Critical Essays*, ed. Sara Munson Deats (London, 2005), pp. 193–212.