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THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF PAIN:  
HANNAH ARENDT MEETS SHAKESPEARE'S SHREW

περι δε εδονης και λυπης θεωρεσαι του τευ πολιτικεν  
φιλοσοφουντος· ουτος γαρ του τελους αρχιτεκτον, προς ο  
βλεποντες εκαστον το μεν κακον το δ' αγαθον απλος λεγομεν.

– Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.xi.1152b.1-2

Unlike the other critics engaging with Arendt and Shakespeare in this volume, I will not attempt to trace a literal connection between their works or their thoughts. Rather, my project resembles the game in which one imagines conversations between famous people: if Hannah Arendt and William Shakespeare found themselves sitting next to one another at dinner party (or, better yet, standing uneasily next to one another at a cocktail party, twiddling napkins and martini glasses), what would they have to say to one another? What, after all, can one say *about* Arendt and Shakespeare--how can one stage an introduction between them? Or, to move away from those unwieldy fictions, the authors: how can one read Arendt's texts, and Shakespeare's, in conjunction with one another? What questions might prompt such an exchange? Such an illegitimate, ahistoricized, exchange...

In her first book on Arendt, Margaret Canovan differentiates between modern "political thought" as such and Arendt's praxis as follows:

What Hannah Arendt means by [political] thought... consists [of] the endless effort of human beings to make sense of what they experience, to get their minds round the things that confront them, the activities they engage in, and above all the events that happen among them. Her work is political thought, not in the sense of being the application of a pre-existing method, whether scientific or philosophical, to political material, but in the sense of representing the free play of an individual mind round politics, making sense of political events and placing them within an unfolding understanding of all that comes within that mind's range.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974). 2-3.

My own project is motivated by a desire to think about the politics of pain, torture, and sexualized violence as they appear in the world today. Yet, while it proceeds from a specific ethical and political impetus, my argument remains primarily literary in nature. In what follows, I sketch a preliminary reading of what we might think of as the dilemma of life that is not yet precisely political, but potentially or becoming-political, in Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew*. I also seek to engage in "political thinking" in the characteristically Arendtian sense outlined by Canovan, that of allowing for a "free play of the mind" over two disparate texts and the socio-political contexts of their inceptions in order to approach "the events that happen" here and now. I have divided the argument into three moments: (1) a brief exegesis on an aporia in Giorgio Agamben's work, which might be traced in part to his reading of Hannah Arendt; (2) an attempt to recuperate Arendt from Agamben's critique; and (3) a literary *exemplum* of the Arendtian problematic in Shakespeare's *Shrew*.

## I. Reading Agamben, Reading Arendt: Gendering Bare Life

In the passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* that I have taken as my epigraph, Aristotle writes: "It is part of the job of the political philosopher to study pleasure and pain, since he is the master-craftsman, and lays down the end which is the standard whereby we pronounce things good or bad in the absolute sense" (1152b.1-2).<sup>2</sup> It's a curiously Socratic statement, really, for Aristotle to have made—surely the "architect of the end" (*telous architekton*) ought to designate the political *actor*—whether citizen or sovereign—not "the political philosopher" (*politikên philosophountos*)? While Hannah Arendt does not, at least to my knowledge, refer specifically to this passage in her writings on Aristotle, she certainly taught the text, and knew it well; the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* (to which Arendt continually refers) form two parts of a single extended work.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle's remark might almost be an epigraph for *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), the first book Arendt published in English, in which she carefully traces the ideological underpinnings of Russian labor camps and Nazi death camps. It might also serve as an epigraph for Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, the first volume of his investigation into the phenomenon of "the camp as *nomos* of the modern."<sup>4</sup> In this book, Agamben begins to trace the metaphysical

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1934). Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references will be to this edition, hereafter cited parenthetically as *NE*.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, *NE* 1094a1-b12, in which Aristotle characterizes political science as that which includes all others, and argues that ethics is itself a subset of politics. Arendt's teaching notes on *The Nicomachean Ethics* from a 1962 seminar at Wesleyan are archived at the Library of Congress, and may be viewed at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mharendt:1./temp/~ammem\\_2COG::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mharendt:1./temp/~ammem_2COG::)

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Il potere sovrano e la nuda vita* (Torino, Italy: Giulio Einaudi, 1995). trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen as *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford

history of the contemporary state of exception through its early twentieth-century origins in the theories of, primarily, Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, in order to fill in the gaps he perceives between Arendt's conceptualization of the rise of totalitarian states and Foucauldian biopolitics. Following Aristotle, Agamben argues that "bare life" is life stripped of civic value — life abandoned by the *polis*. But he does not always take into account the fact that women, who are rarely considered full citizens in any sense, already constitute an exception from the masculinist juridical paradigm. Gendered acts of violence form a dimension of the state of exception that remain largely unexamined by Agamben. Though Agamben recognizes sexuality and sexual difference as "the pure political element" in the works of the Marquis de Sade, and he also notes the "particularly grotesque" nature of one form of sexual torture, in the end he reproduces, to a certain extent, the omissions with which he charges Foucault and Arendt (HS 134, 155).

This aporia becomes clear in Agamben's reading of Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, which he cites in a long footnote to Ch. 6, "The Ban and the Wolf" (HS 107-8/120). Agamben draws on the twelfth century Breton *lai* in order to demonstrate the inextricable link between the beast, he who has been "banished," and the sovereign, who pronounces the decision that institutes the "ban." But Agamben can only explicate the connection by suppressing half the story, the relation between the half-bestial nobleman who becomes the *bisclavret* and his wife, who by the end of the *lai* has herself become the beast, monstrous and abandoned.<sup>5</sup> Agamben's reading focuses on the sovereign's recognition of Bisclavret's essential humanity, his "rational mind," displayed in the act of begging for mercy, for life.<sup>6</sup> Agamben reads this scene as the first touching incidence of the "special proximity between werewolf and sovereign" ("*Anche la particolare prossimità fra lupo mannaro e sovrano si ritrova ulteriormente nella storia,*" HS 108/120), but does not account for the ways this "proximity" is, in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's term, homosocial, or in Carol Pateman's, a fraternal social contract.<sup>7</sup>

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UP). All subsequent references will be abbreviated *HS* and cited parenthetically, with the English page numbers preceding the Italian (e.g. *HS* 10/12).

<sup>5</sup> The nobleman, significantly, remains unnamed (as do many of Marie's characters); in their edition, Hanning and Ferrante note that once transformed, the article *Le* that had preceded *bisclavret* is dropped — he nominally becomes the beast. See Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante, trans., "Bisclavret," in *The Lais of Marie de France* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1978), 95 TN. I. 125. Hereafter all references in French will be to Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965); all references in translation will be to Hanning and Ferrante's edition, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* I. 57.

<sup>7</sup> See Pateman's "The Fraternal Social Contract," Ch. 2 of *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1989) and *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1988), as well as Sedgwick's Introduction to *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (NY: Columbia UP, 1985).

For Agamben, the wife serves as a mere footnote to the footnote itself, a dismissable plot device. He treats the violent episode of the wolf's revenge with a certain cavalier humour: "The inevitable encounter with the ex-wife and the punishment of the woman follow" ("*Segue l'immancabile incontro con l'ex moglie e la punizione della donna*" ), he states, before going on to argue that the important thing about the tale is the wolf's transformation "on the very bed of the sovereign" ("*Ma importante è che, alla fine, il ridiventar uomo di Bisclavret ha luogo sul letto stesso del sovrano,*" HS 108/120).<sup>8</sup> This is a crucial point, and nicely illustrates Agamben's argument about the formerly temporary character of the state of exception that has now become permanent. However, there's more going on here than just the "special proximity" of sovereign and beast. In Marie's *lai*, "bare life" comes into being with the woman's betrayal,<sup>9</sup> not the sovereign decree; in fact, the sovereign decree here *reverses* the state of exception, reincluding Bisclavret in the social order as a privileged member of the king's household.<sup>10</sup> Bisclavret's reinstatement into the civil sphere occurs only with the disfigurement, torture and banishment of the sexually unruly female, who literally can't deal with the "animal" side of her marriage. As demonstrated by

<sup>8</sup> What Agamben casually terms "the encounter (*incontro*) with the ex-wife" refers to the following episode: "*Oiez cum il est bien vengiez! / Le neis li esracha del vis. / Quei li peüst il faire pis?*" "Now listen to how well he [Bisclavret] avenged himself! / He tore the nose off her face. / What worse thing could he have done to her?" (ll.234-36). At the instigation of one of his counselors, the king then tortures the wife to obtain an admission of her betrayal of her husband: "*Kar metiz la dame en destreir, / S'aucune chose vus direit*" (out of fear and pain / she told all") (ll.255-65).

<sup>9</sup> The werewolf's "estimable wife," rather understandably wondering why her husband disappears for three days of the week, asks him about his absences, though she is "so afraid of [his] anger / that nothing frightens [her] more"; the *bisclavret* tells her the truth, and that his clothing is what enables him to transform back to his human form from his bestial one. Upon hearing this, she "[i]s terrified of the whole adventure," and turns to "a knight of that region / who had loved her for a long time," consenting to become his mistress and conspiring with him to steal the *bisclavret's* clothing, trapping him in wolf form (*ibid* ll.21-22; 62-78; 98-120). This particular form of conjugal betrayal, as well as the changeling motif, are of course common folk topoi: compare, for example, the story of Llew Llaw Gyffes and Blodeuwedd in "Math the son of Mathonwy," the oldest of the tales that comprise the Welsh Mabinogion (quite possibly known to the Breton Marie), or the biblical Samson and Delilah, for the former. See AT types D113.1 (werewolf); D537 (transformation by changing clothing); D630 (periodic transformations); K2213 (treacherous wife); K2213.4.1 (secret of hero's vulnerability disclosed by hero's wife); K2213.3 (faithless wife plots with paramour against her husband's life), in Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* vols. I-6 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1955).

<sup>10</sup> "*Li reis l'en meïne en sun chastel; mut en fu liez, mut li est bel, / Kar unke mes tel n'ot veü; / A grant merveille l'ot tenu / E mut le tient a grant chierté. / A tuz les suens ad comaundé / Que sur s'amur le gardent bien / E li ne masfacent de rien, / Ne par nul de eus ne seit feruz; Bien seit abevreiz e peüz. / Cil le garderent volenters; Tuz jurs entre les chevalers / E pres del re se alout cuchier.*" "The king led him to his castle; / he was delighted with this turn of events, / for he'd never seen anything like it. / He considered the beast a great wonder / and held him very dear. / He commanded all his followers, / for the sake of their love for him, / to guard Bisclavret well, / and under no circumstances to do him harm; / none of them should strike him; rather, he should be well fed and watered. / They willingly guarded the creature; / every day he went to sleep / among the knights, near the king" (ll. 165-77).

the daughters' "noselessness," women continue to bear the marks of their banishment in ways that men, perhaps, do not.<sup>11</sup>

I retell the *lai* at such length here both to set up certain preliminary parallels between the "bare life" of the *bisclavret's* wife and the situation of Shakespeare's Katherina (which I will outline in the third section of this argument) and to illustrate the need for a much more thorough accounting of the ways sexual difference and sexuality are both produced and effaced by the ideology of the camp. Midway through *Homo Sacer*, Agamben himself articulates a clear call for what must come next in any theorizing of or resistance to the political paradigm of the camp: "In the notion of bare life the interlacing of politics and life has become so tight that it cannot easily be analyzed. Until we become aware of the political nature of bare life and its modern avatars (biological life, sexuality, etc.), we will not succeed in clarifying the opacity at their center" (120). This call proceeds from Agamben's critique of Hannah Arendt: why, he asks, did one of the greatest theorists of totalitarianism never address the fact that "the radical transformation of politics into the realm of bare life (that is, into a camp) legitimated and necessitated total domination" (120)? But I will argue that Arendt does, in fact, address some of the very biopolitical processes that Agamben claims she elides. By paying close attention to Arendt's reading of Aristotle's *Politics* in *The Human Condition* and extending it to *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, we can uncover her more implicit argument about what Agamben parenthetically designates as "biological life, sexuality, etc."

## II. Reading Arendt, Reading Aristotle: Political Life and the Place of Pain

Love and pain, according to Arendt (who follows Heidegger in this, to a certain extent<sup>12</sup>) in *The Human Condition*, comprise the two experiences that remain absolutely outside the public realm of political action.<sup>13</sup> Whereas for Aristotle,

<sup>11</sup> *La femme ad del país ostee / E chacee de la cuntree. / Cil s'en alat ensemble od li, / Pur ki sun seignur ot trahi. / Enfanz en ad asés eüz, / Puis unt esté bien cuneüz / [E] del semblant e del visage: / Plusurs [des] femmes del lignage, / C'est verité, senz nes sunt nees / E si viveient esnasees.* "[The king] banished the wife, / chased her out of the country...She had several children / who were widely known/ for their appearance:/ several women of the family / were actually born without noses, / and lived out their lives noseless" (*ibid* II. 255-65; 305-14). Cutting off the nose is apparently a common folk punishment for treachery as well as adultery; see AT types Q450.1 (torture as punishment); Q451 (mutilation as punishment), in particular Q451.5.1 (nose cut off as punishment for adultery) and 451.5.1.1 (mistress's nose cut off as punishment for faithlessness), in Thompson (*op cit.*)

<sup>12</sup> For a nuanced reading of Arendt's philosophical debt to her teacher, see "The Anxiety of Influence," Ch. 3 of Dana Villa's *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1999) pp. 61-86, as well as Villa's more complete treatment, *Arendt and Heidegger: The fate of the Political* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> To enable ease of reading and to cut down on footnotes, all subsequent citations of Arendt's *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: Chicago UP, 1998) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego and

love in the form of the “union between man and woman” is the originary moment in the passage to man’s “natural” political state, according to Arendt, “love, in distinction from friendship, is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public” (HC 51).<sup>14</sup> Arendt’s distinction between “killed” and “extinguished” here is telling, for while “killed” suggests an violently active cut, a decisive blow delivered from without, the connotations of “extinguished” (though surely neither precisely passive, nor lacking violence) imply an almost involuntary suffocation, a slower, more insidious demise that is, almost, from within—love exposed to the public gaze collapses in upon itself, withers away. If the quintessential role of the former private sphere was “the shelter of intimacy,” she claims, since the post-Enlightenment rise of the social realm, “the intimacy of the heart... has no objective tangible place in the world, nor can the society against which it protests and asserts itself be located with the same certainty as the public sphere” (HC 38-39).<sup>15</sup> While this paper cannot delve extensively into the shifting territory of Arendt’s disquisitions on love (what it means, the forms it might take), and though it is surely a gross oversimplification to refer to marriage in general as a relationship grounded in “love” (rather than necessity, as it is for Aristotle), I would suggest that the *proximity* of Arendt’s points about love and pain compel a certain interpretive coupling, that what Arendt calls the “worldlessness” of the former can provide a useful, if somewhat paradoxical, gloss on the utterly effacing power of pain. Such a coupling also suggests that a literary example of the particular “worldlessness” Arendt describes might usefully be traced not, as one might expect, through tragedy, but through comedy or romance.

Like love, Arendt says, pain cannot be “transform[ed] into a shape fit for public appearance”; it is “truly a borderline experience between life as ‘being among men’ (*inter homines esse*) and death, so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that it cannot assume an appearance at all” (HC 50-51). For Arendt, as for Aristotle, of course, the capacity for rational choice (*proairesis*) as expressed in speech distinguishes man as a *political* animal (*politikon zôon*) from other “gregarious animals,” who may only express pleasure and pain.<sup>16</sup> Arendt claims that pain is “at the same time the most private and least communicable of all [experiences],” locking the sufferer away from self as well as world, as it “actually deprives us of our feeling for reality to such an extent that we can

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NY: Harcourt, 1994) will be abbreviated to *HC* and *OT*, and contained parenthetically in the body text of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> *Sunduzesthai*, the term Aristotle uses for the union between man and woman in the *Politics*, designates the “coupling” or binding of the marriage ceremony itself, not the married state. See H. Rackham, ed. and trans., *Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1932; the reference is to 1252a.26-28). Aristotle later distinguishes between a man’s “royal” (*basilikôs*) rule over his children and his “constitutional” (*politikôs*) rule over his wife (1259b.1-18).

<sup>15</sup> Arendt refers specifically to the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau here, but her comments on the “rebellion of the heart” (a philosophical position that she connects, usefully, to the rise of the novel as a literary genre) must also, I feel, be considered relevant to an examination of her remarks on pain, here and elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *op. cit.*, 1253a2-18.

forget it more quickly and easily than anything else" (HC 50-51).<sup>17</sup> Extreme pain translates the political animal to mere life, traps intellect and soul within the suffering body to the extent that it can render us what Arendt calls "a bundle of reactions" (this is particularly true of prolonged and systematic pain inflicted from without) (OT 438). It is, paradoxically, both the most and the least individualized of experiences, since it can only be experienced by the individual, yet its incommunicability and (for those who survive it) rapid effacement from memory obliterate the individual's agency. It casts one outside the realm of the human, outside the realm of judgment (a crucial act, for Arendt); it can never truly assume a rational discursive "shape," and may only be spoken of in retrospect, usually by analogy with a wound or a physical weapon (such as stabbing, shooting, pounding, and so forth).<sup>18</sup> Arendt's account in *The Human Condition* of the incommunicability of pain bears some resemblance to what she says of the paradox of memory and communication in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. It is impossible to comprehend the camps without having been there, but equally impossible for anyone who has survived the camps to convey much of the experience. Noting the "peculiar unreality and lack of credibility" that she claims attaches to survivors' accounts of death camps, Arendt argues that

The more authentic [the reports] are, the less they attempt to communicate things that evade human understanding and human experience—sufferings, that is, that transform men into 'uncomplaining animals.' None of these reports inspires those passions of outrage and sympathy through which men have always been mobilized for justice. On the contrary, anyone speaking or writing about concentration camps is still regarded as suspect; and if the speaker has resolutely returned to the world of the living, he himself is often assailed by doubts with regard to his own truthfulness, as though he had mistaken a nightmare for reality. (OT 439)

Here Arendt is more specific than she will later be in *The Human Condition*: pain disables not just voice but *narrative*—it inhabits the phantasmagorically liminal space of "nightmare," what she calls "a phantom world" (OT 445).<sup>19</sup> The inability

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<sup>17</sup> Elaine Scarry, whose analysis of the "world-making" (e.g. relating to labor) and "world-destroying" (e.g. relating to war or torture) capacities of pain occasionally accords with Arendt's, concurs: "physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not *of or for* anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language" (*The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: OUP, 1985), pg. 4.

<sup>18</sup> See Scarry's introductory comments on the two types of metaphors used to describe pain, which she classifies as "external agents" or "weapons" and "bodily damage pictured as accompanying the pain" (*ibid* 15-17).

<sup>19</sup> In this context, it is worth pointing ahead to the complicated structure of Shakespeare's play: the marriage plot and subplot are framed as the dream vision of the tinker Sly. Scholars have long speculated that earlier redactions of the text may have included a final scene that returns to the framing dream-narrative, rendering the "now kiss me, Kate" closure of the play even more ambiguous. Despite Arendt's antipathy for Freudian psychology, it is perhaps also worth pointing out certain parallels between her ideas here and Freud's theory of the voiceless nature of melancholia. See Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), in *General Psychological Theory*:

to communicate the experience means that even survivors remain, in some ways, inside the camp. Somewhat like Milton's Satan, for whom "which way I fly is hell; myself am hell,"<sup>20</sup> in Arendt's account such an internalization of the ideology and regimes of the camp is what truly comprises "total domination." It becomes something approaching what Foucault terms bio-politics, which means that the steps implemented to "kill the person" cannot be simply erased or negated.

But what about what we might term "the place of pain" *outside* the camps? I began my reading of Arendt by suggesting that her statements regarding love can tell us something regarding her points about pain. In *The Human Condition*, written in the late 1950s (that is, more than five years after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*), Arendt situates pain not in the "phantom world" of the camps, but in the domestic or private realm that she claims the rise of the social has eclipsed:<sup>21</sup>

It has always been the bodily part of human existence that needed to be hidden in privacy, all things connected with the necessity of the life process itself, which prior to the modern age comprehended all activities serving the subsistence of the individual and the survival of the species. Hidden away were the laborers who 'with their bodies minister to the [bodily] needs of life,'\* and the women who with their bodies guarantee the physical survival of the species. *Women and slaves belonged to the same category and were hidden away not only because they were somebody else's property but because their life was "laborious," devoted to bodily functions.* (HC 72; emphasis mine. \*Arendt's citation: *Politics* 1254b25)

Pain does not even belong to the *oikos*, properly speaking, though the *oikos* "shelters" it while also obscuring it. The rise of the social means that the experience of pain loses all meaning, both for the private individual (in the loss of intelligibility), as well as for the public which the individual anonymously serves. Here we might think of the paradox of remembering and describing the experience of the death camps in *Origins*. We might also recall the *aphrêtôr*, *athemistos*, *anestios* –the "tribeless, lawless, hearthless one" that Aristotle borrows from Homer's, (*Pol.* I.1.1253a5-10), but we must also acknowledge Aristotle's claim that even "life that endures much suffering" (*enousês*), contains "something of well-being and sweetness" (*tinou eumerias kai gluktêtos*) (*Pol.* III.3.1287b23-31). Arendt's conceptualization of pain, then, seems to move beyond the Aristotelian model to which she is indebted, at least at this moment. Pain is one defining

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*Papers on Metapsychology*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), pp. 164-79, as well as Judith Butler's reading of Freud's essay in "Psychic Inceptions: Melancholy, Ambivalence, Rage" in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1997), pp. 167-198.

<sup>20</sup> Milton, *Paradise Lost* IV.75

<sup>21</sup> Several recent works of criticism focus on Arendt's account of the social realm. See, for example, Hannah Fennichel Pitkin's *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1998), in which Pitkin notes the "feminine" nature of Arendt's social, likening it to a devouring "bad mother" (168-75). While I agree with many of her points, to my mind Arendt is more of a political Hegelian than Pitkin thinks she is (10).



characteristic of the *animal laborans*, which stands explicitly opposed to active, political life, but pain (like labor, though Arendt distances herself from the notion of the gendered division of labor, HC 47-48, n.38) is also gendered, as we see here.<sup>22</sup> The social sphere “hides away” pain more effectively than the supposed separation of public and private, for it covertly replaces labor with work, which retains public value but can never be recognized publicly. Here we must note that though Arendt’s essential point about the non-political, obscured labor of both women and slaves is true, the first part of her formulation, strictly speaking, is not, at least for Aristotle in the *Politics*. Aristotle distinguishes between women and slaves, arguing that identifying the two is the mark of barbarian societies (I.1.1252b1-9). Arendt says that “while we have become excellent in the laboring we perform in public, our capacity for action and speech has lost much of its former quality since the rise of the social realm banished these into the sphere of the intimate and the private” (HC 49). Public recognition and honor, which for Arendt as for Aristotle motivate citizens in their pursuit of the good life, are no longer possible, for work has become anonymous, corporate, mechanized. Since the rise of the social realm has transformed individuals into “cogs” in a bureaucratic machine, this extreme removal reveals, finally, the social’s truly world-destroying capacity: as it allows no recognition of pain in its members, it becomes able to inflict pain on others. The most negative face of such anonymity and decorporealization is the totalitarian regime of the Nazi concentration camp. The superlogical, accretive methodology of “total domination” that Arendt had outlined six years earlier retains little of Aristotle’s sense of τ-χη, the “fortune,” “chance” or “accident” that Aristotle initially argues might render the “naturally” political animal “tribeless, lawless, heartless.” For

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<sup>22</sup> Though some feminists, such as Adrienne Rich, have long castigated Arendt for her apparent failure to fully engage with what she called “The Woman Question,” I would argue that she *does* do so – perhaps not overtly, but often, as she does here, rather more implicitly. While Rich argues (with some justice) that in *The Human Condition* Arendt “stare[s] straight through unseeing” issues such as “women as the laborers in reproduction...women as workers in production...the relationship of women’s unpaid labor in the home to the separation between ‘private’ and ‘public’ spheres...the woman’s body as commodity,” Arendt was in fact more than aware of such issues, as attested by her 1933 essay “On the Emancipation of Women” (a review of Dr. Alice RÜhle-Gerstel’s *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart: Eine Psychologische Bilanz*). While the length constraints of this paper do not permit me to engage with this issue as fully I would like, I would agree with critics such as Bonnie Honig, Elizabeth Young-Breuhl, Mary Dietz and Hannah Pitkin (among others) who attempt to ask, in Honig’s words, “How does reading Arendt change the way we think about feminist theory?” See Rich, “Conditions for Work,” in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-78* (New York and London: Norton, 1979), reference at pp. 211-212; Arendt, “On the Emancipation of Women” (1933), in *Essays on Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994); Young-Breuhl, “Hannah Arendt Among Feminists,” in *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, ed. Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 307-24; Honig, “Introduction: The Arendt Question in Feminism” and “Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity” in Honig, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt* (University Park, PA: Penn State UP, 1995), ref. at pg. 3; Dietz, “Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt,” in Honig, ed., pp. 17-50; Pitkin, “Conformism, Housekeeping, and the Attack of the Blob: The Origins of Hannah Arendt’s Concept of the Social,” in Honig, ed., pp. 51-82, and *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt’s Concept of the Social* (*op cit.*)

Arendt, as indeed for Aristotle, in the end there's no "accident" to such processes.

### III. Reading Shakespeare: The Camp as *Nomos* of the Marriage

Though it might seem counterintuitive to examine practices of subjugation and taming in a comedy rather than in a tragedy, *Shrew* provides an instructive *mise-en-scène* for a literary framing of the claims I'm making about Arendt precisely *because* of the generic conventions of comedy—but most comic conventions are rather harrowed by this play in particular.<sup>23</sup> Like most comedies, Shakespeare's comic romances focus not on the married *state*, but on its potential, stopping short at the threshold (or at the curtains of the marriage bed). *The Taming of the Shrew* (ca. 1592), however, presents several anomalies, beginning with Katherina and Petruchio's wedding, which takes place in Act III.<sup>24</sup> Many critics have noted the particular ways delayed or disrupted rituals (most obviously the wedding) in *Shrew* function in terms of dramatic tension and plot structure, and I would suggest that the peculiar anxieties in this play must also be thought of as carrying an implicit political valence.<sup>25</sup>

In Shakespeare's plays, comic violence does not generally serve as a major plot device, but as a more or less light-hearted diversion from the marriage-bound trajectory, often relegated to sub-plots—perhaps a Dogberry or a Lucio or a Malvolio threatens or endures comic blows (outside a duel), but a Benedick or a Claudio or even an Angelo does not stoop to such low slapstick. Part of the strangeness of *The Taming of the Shrew* is that it is, of course, all about comic violence, the domestication of the unruly Katherina—a process, Petruchio tells

<sup>23</sup> Critical wrangling over the generic designation of *The Taming of the Shrew* has been unusually lively. Recent interpretations have generally swung between reading it as a farce or, more often, a "problem comedy." See, for example, Richard A. Burt's "Charisma, Coercion, and Comic Form in *The Taming of the Shrew*," in *William Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), pp. 79-92; Margaret Lael Mikesell's "'Love Wrought These Miracles': Marriage and Genre in *The Taming of the Shrew*," in *The Taming of the Shrew: Critical Essays*, ed. Dana L. Aspinall (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), pp.106-29; and Coppelia Kahn's "'The Taming of the Shrew': Shakespeare's Mirror of Marriage" (*Modern Language Studies* 5.1 [1975]: 88-102).

<sup>24</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all references to the play will be to Ann Thompson's edition (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1984). *Shrew* presents a complicated textual history. The Stationer's Register of 2 May, 1594 lists "A plesant Conceyted historie called the Tamyng of a Shrowe," which may or may not be another version of Shakespeare's play. *The Taming of the Shrew* did not appear in published form until the First Folio of 1623, in which it is one of the "Comedies," but it is thought to have been composed in June 1592 or for the previous season (Thompson 1-3). For a concise summary of the somewhat vexed question of textual and performance history and dating, see Thompson's Introduction; for more detailed analysis, see, also, Duthie, Hosley, and Mincoff.

<sup>25</sup> My line of argument here draws something from Gary Schneider's reading of different rituals and forms of "shaming"; see his "The Public, the Private, and the Shaming of the Shrew" (*SEL* 42.2: 2002) 235-58.

her, by which he will bring her “From a wild Kate to a tame Kate / Conformable as other household Kates” (II.i.266-67).<sup>26</sup> The play is set in Padua, part of the Venetian republic: the action occurs in locations that symbolize the bastions of Paduan mercantilism—the marketplace itself, the church, the home of Baptista Minola, Kate and Bianca’s merchant father, and Petruchio’s country house. Petruchio himself is the son of “A merchant of great traffic throughout the world,” the deceased Vincentio (I.i.11-12), and *Shrew* thus bears certain similarities with that other play centering on the exigencies of civil society in mercantile Venice.<sup>27</sup> If Kate’s final speech marks her as, finally, “conformable,” fit for civic reintegration after her banishment to the country only because she will now uphold normative order, this process is analogous, in a strange way, to what happens in the bureaucratic “rule by nobody” that characterizes Arendt’s social realm.

The framing narrative (the dream of the tinker Sly) and certain other metatheatrical moments in the play (e.g. Petruchio’s “Prithee, Kate, let’s stand aside and see the end of this controversy,” V.i.48) set up a dramatic context that continually calls into question the very nature of what constitutes performance or “show.” The courtly “show” continually staged by and around Elizabeth I, another unmarried “shrew,” provided what was arguably the biggest theatrical draw in town; conversely, much political comment and criticism happened on Elizabethan stages. Kate’s final speech (whether read ironically, as some critics have, or not) valorizes patriarchy in a way that could not but be supremely topical in the England of the 1590s. Petruchio’s soliloquy at IV.i activates the common analogy between husband/wife and sovereign/subjects that Kate’s final speech addresses in much more detail:

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,  
And ‘tis my hope to end successfully.  
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty,  
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged,  
For then she never looks upon her lure.  
Another way I have to man my haggard,  
To make her come and know her keeper’s call,  
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites  
That bate and beat and will not be obedient.  
She ate no meat today, nor none shall eat;  
Last night she slept not, nor tonight she shall not.  
As with the meat, some undeservèd fault

<sup>26</sup> Unfolding the possible senses of the pun on Kate/cate here, Natasha Korda cogently demonstrates the ambivalent construction of Kate as a consumer of “cates” (luxuries), which both cements and unmoors her potential on the marriage market in patriarchal Padua. Korda traces connections between Kate’s own ambiguous status, commodity fluctuations, and Shakespeare’s language play. See her “Domesticating Commodities in *The Taming of the Shrew*” (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 47.2 [1996]: 109-31), as well as Lena Cowen Orlin’s “The Performance of Things in *The Taming of the Shrew*,” in Aspinall, ed., 187-209.

<sup>27</sup> See Julia Reinhard Lupton’s “Merchants of Venice, Circles of Citizenship,” in *Citizen-Saints: Shakespeare and Political Theology* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005), 73-102.

I'll find about the making of the bed,  
 And here I'll fling the pillow, there the bolster,  
 This way the coverlet, another way the sheets.  
 Ay, and amid this hurly I intend  
 That all is done in reverend care of her.  
 And, in conclusion, she shall watch all night,  
 And if she chance to nod I'll rail and brawl  
 And with the clamour keep her still awake.  
 This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,  
 And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humour.  
 He that knows better how to tame a shrew,  
 Now let him speak – 'tis charity to show.  
 (IV. ii.159-182)

Petruchio founds his “politic” reign, then, on practices of surveillance (“to watch her, as we watch these kites”) and deprivation—practices that, as Emily Detmer suggests, must be considered more than “mere” domestic violence.<sup>28</sup> As we have, perhaps, witnessed most recently in the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee wiretap hearings, the question of whether or not “surveillance” may be accounted “force” continues to be a problem that blurs whatever lines may arbitrarily be drawn between personal rights and communal good.<sup>29</sup> And the ongoing outrages at Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib and Bagram might be cited as recent examples of the ways depriving prisoners of sleep and food do amount to torture. As we continue to witness, torture often takes explicitly sexualized forms. Much has been said of Petruchio’s characterization of Kate as animal, monster, demon and whore in this play, and we might recall the nameless, monstrous, banished wife of Marie de France’s *lai* in this context. Here, Petruchio’s analogy of the “sharp and passing empty” falcon who must “stoop” before she is to be “full-gorged” suggests that his taming strategy involves more than depriving Kate of food. In conjunction with his intention to “man my haggard” and all the talk of disturbed nights and violently tossed-about bedclothes that follows, the specter of sexual violence here cannot be ignored.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> In “Civilizing Subordination: Domestic Violence and the Taming of the Shrew,” Detmer argues: “[M]y point is not just that taming by policy can be violent but also that the wife-beating reformers’ emphasis on ‘blows’ makes other coercive and threatening behavior appear to be outside the model for what counts as domestic violence” (282). For further historical and literary background on taming, see, also, Lynda E. Boose’s “Scolding Bridles and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman’s Unruly Member” (*SQ* 42.2 [1991]: 179-213), and Frances E. Dolan’s *The Taming of the Shrew: Texts and Contexts* (Boston and New York: Bedford, 1996).

<sup>29</sup> In the wiretap hearings, Attorney General Gonzalez argued that surveillance of U. S. citizens is legal given the 2001 resolution authorizing the President to “use all necessary and appropriate force” to combat terrorism. See, for example, Adam Liptak’s article in the *New York Times*, “DOMESTIC SURVEILLANCE: THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS; In Limelight at Wiretap Hearing: 2 Laws, but Which Should Rule?” (February 7, 2006, Late Edition).

<sup>30</sup> See OED “man, *v*” I.4, III.8,9; the former carries an implicit sexual register. “Haggard” initially referred specifically to a wild *female* hawk, thence to “a wild and intractable person (at first a female)”; the second example given in the OED is from *Shrew* IV.ii.39. Thus “to man my haggard” *can* (admittedly with some stretching) suggest not just falconry but sexual domination.

Petruchio concludes his soliloquy with a couplet: “He that knows better how to tame a shrew, / Now let him speak—’tis charity to show” (ll. 180-82). His quasi-legalistic call here enjoins a certain movement beyond the dramatic framework of the play, and his language recalls (with a twist) the rites of marriage itself. That is, he melds and perverts theatrical and politico-religious topoi, comically exhorting the audience to “show” (that is, do the actor one better), and alluding to the legal publication of banns, the purpose of which was to give anyone who wished to present a pre-contract a chance to do so. The soliloquy thus both begins and ends with a focus on marriage as a legal and political (rather than a primarily domestic) institution, a public binding which models the relationship between sovereigns and subjects. Obviously, the situation of characters in a Shakespearean comedy cannot be compared with the all-too real events I cite above, but Shakespeare’s play can provide a literary and theoretical framework for thinking about some of the ideologies that underlay such events. I propose a more or less allegorical reading of Katherina’s situation, which we might, tweaking Giorgio Agamben’s formulation slightly, term “the camp as *nomos* of the marriage.”

I began this argument with the assertion that the next step to thinking about “the camp as *nomos* of the modern” is to, as Agamben himself suggests, focus on the “modern avatars of bare life,” in the form of the production and control of sexualized bodies and identities. What would this mean, and what can a four hundred year old play have to say about such things? Precisely this: Arendt argues that in order to “kill the spontaneity” in individuals, in order to render them truly stateless, anonymous “bundles of reactions,” it is first necessary to obliterate all traces of “the differentiation of the individual, his [*sic*] unique identity” (OT 453). Sexual difference and sexuality are one locus of individualized identity, and the process of total domination simultaneously effaces them utterly and enforces grotesque parodies of gendered norms in the form of certain types of torture (witness the most recent batch of photographs proceeding from Abu Ghraib, or the ongoing practice of genocidal rape in Darfur). Shakespeare’s Kate is obviously not subjected to torture in this way, but the play does illustrate her transportation to a social sphere that denies the “protection” afforded by the private realm even as it also annihilates any potential for political action and public recognition of that action. And the generic conventions of comedy mean that as an audience, we don’t know quite how to respond to this play: with the exception of the happy ending (the “ending” that is nevertheless called somewhat into question by the unclosed framing narrative), a bare sketch of the main plotline sounds rather like the beginning of something written by Webster thirty years later—it’s a tragedy that is wrenched somewhat unconvincingly into comedy by Kate’s kiss in V.i.122 and, of course, by her final speech. That is to say, in order for the audience to buy the comic resolution, the entire “taming” process we’ve just seen needs to dissipate like Sly’s dream—and for that to happen we need to become, to an extent,

complicitous in the taming, accomplices after the fact.<sup>31</sup> In order for Petruchio's "politic reign" to "end successfully," I submit, it is necessary for the audience to participate by proxy in the "show" of marital taming he stages, and it is necessary that the "show" of Katherina's defiance be covered over or "hidden away"—de-politicized, devalued, and eventually erased. "Submitting" to the comedy here requires not just acceptance but internalization of what Petruchio calls his "awful rule and right supremacy" (V.ii.109)—the audience's "taming" occurs along with Kate's, and mimics it, to a certain extent.

If the audience is drawn into the web of Petruchio's "taming," what then? In "Collective Responsibility," a 1968 lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the American Philosophical Society, Arendt distinguishes between "guilt" and "responsibility" as follows: "Where all are guilty, nobody is. Guilt, unlike responsibility, always singles out; it is strictly personal. It refers to an act, not to intentions or potentialities. It is only in a metaphorical sense that we can say we *feel* guilty for the sins of our fathers or our deeds or mankind, in short, for deeds we have not done."<sup>32</sup> What I am suggesting is not that we as spectators are "guilty" in the literal sense that we are implicated in the taming; rather, that recognizing the ways in which we are "responsible" for our "responses" (two words born of the same etymology) to the comedy can serve as a corrective for this detachment—and that the first step in moving *away* from "the camp as *nomos* of the modern" is to translate this lesson in spectatorship to a lesson in more engaged citizenship.

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<sup>31</sup> The play apparently had a somewhat troubled performance history even in its own day, as Ann Thompson and others have shown and as John Fletcher's 1611 "sequel," *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tam'd* seems to attest. Thompson argues that the discomfort modern audiences feel with Kate's submission is hardly a new thing: "despite a long and vigorous stage tradition, it has probably been played straight less often than any other play in the canon" (18).

<sup>32</sup> Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment*, ed. Jerome Kohn (New York: Schocken, 2003), pp. 147-58; reference at pg. 147. The notion of "collective responsibility" is one to which Arendt returned often in her post-WWII writings and lectures. See, for example, her 1945 essay "Organized Guilt and Universal Responsibility," reprinted in *Essays on Understanding, 1930-1954* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), pp. 121-32, as well as the posthumously published lectures now collected in *Responsibility and Judgment*.

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