

EDITED BY DALE SALWAK

writers

AND THEIR

mothers



Writers and Their Mothers

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Editor

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Editor

Dale Salwak
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For our mothers

Preface

The idea for this collection goes back to 2013, when I was reading Alexander McCall Smith's *What W. H. Auden Can Do for You* and came upon the following words: "There may be no book on the mothers of poets, or artists in general, but it might one day be written and would be, I think, an enlightening read."

This book considers some of the provocative questions he suggested: personal and anecdotal, philosophical and practical. What were the early maternal influences on an artist and how were they manifested in the work? Was there truth in Georges Simenon's claim that novelists were united in their hatred of their mothers? Or of Gore Vidal's assertion, "Hatred of one parent or the other can make an Ivan the Terrible or a Hemingway; the protective love, however, of two devoted parents can absolutely destroy an artist"? What were, in Carl Sandburg's words, the "silent working" of their inner lives as children become writers? What happened to writers who were wounded by their mothers? What were the links between childhood joy and sorrow and the growth of individual genius?

I invited twenty-two prominent novelists, poets, and literary critics from both sides of the Atlantic to write a new chapter about the profound and frequently perplexing bond between writer and mother (and in one instance, stepmother). I cast my net wide, providing the focus and theme, making suggestions for possible approaches, but ultimately leaving it to

each contributor to decide on their own methods. Thus prompted, the contributors bring to life in compelling detail the thoughts, work, loves, friendships, passions and, above all, the influence of mothers upon their literary offspring from Shakespeare to the present. Part I is biographical; Part II is autobiographical. All but two of the essays were produced expressly for this volume.

Many of the contributors evoke the ideal with fond and loving memories: understanding, selfless, spiritual, tender, protective, reassuring and self-assured mothers who created environments favorable to the development of their children's gifts. At the opposite end of the parenting spectrum, however, we also see tortured mothers who ignored, interfered with, smothered or abandoned their children. Their early years were times of traumatic loss, unhappily dominated by death and human frailty.

An edited volume is only as good as its contributors. I had a splendid field to choose from and am profoundly grateful to all of them. Some forged on through the demands of other deadlines, illness (their own or a loved one's) or in one instance the inexpressible sadness of losing a daughter. The late Kenneth Silverman, whom I have known as a very good friend and highly respected scholar for more than thirty years, produced his essay on Walt Whitman, his final piece of writing, while undergoing treatment for lung cancer. My own mother, now ninety-six and still living in her home, read with immense and varied pleasure each of these essays as they arrived. Their truthfulness and sensitivity moved her deeply, sometimes to tears.

Finally, I would like to express my great debt to Ben Doyle, commissioning editor at Palgrave Macmillan, whose many conversations with me shaped the project; to Camille Davies, also at Palgrave Macmillan, for guiding me through the thicket of permissions, contracts, and myriad other details that an editor inevitably encounters; to Jeffrey Meyers, who suggested a structure for the book and, along with Rachel Hadas and Edwin A. Dawes (Chairman of the Philip Larkin Society), generously helped me to acquire some of the contributors; and to Ann Thwaite, who assisted at an early stage with the title as well as the focus of the project.

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Extracts from William Golding's unpublished manuscripts and journals.

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Martin Amis is the author of ten novels, the memoir *Experience*, two collections of stories, and six collections of non-fiction. He lives in New York.

Judy Carver is the younger child of William Golding and his wife Ann. Born in 1945, she was educated at Godolphin School, Salisbury, the University of Sussex, and St Anne's College, Oxford, where she did research into an eighteenth-century anthology of poetry. She married in 1971, and worked in publishing for several years until she had children. In 2011, the year of her father's centenary, Faber and Faber published her memoir, *The Children of Lovers*, which described life growing up in a household dominated by her father's extraordinary talent and her parents' intense, creative marriage. Further details: www.william-golding.co.uk

Anthony Daniels, born in 1949, is a retired psychiatrist who worked for many years in an inner-city hospital and prison. He is the author of many books, including *Romancing Opiates*, in which he traced the origins of modern attitudes to addiction to De Quincey and Coleridge. He has written literary essays and book reviews for many publications, including the *TLS*, the *Sunday Telegraph*,

the *National Review*, the *Spectator*, *The* (London) *Times* and the *New Criterion*. His memoirs of his life in prison (as a doctor) were published in June, 2017, under the title *The Knife Went In*.

Rita Dove, recipient of the 1987 Pulitzer Prize in poetry, served as U.S. Poet Laureate from 1993 to 1995. The author of numerous poetry books, most recently *Sonata Mulattica* (2009) and *Collected Poems 1974–2004* (2016), she has also published short stories, a novel, a play and, as editor, *The Penguin Anthology of Twentieth-Century American Poetry*. Among her many recognitions are the 2011 National Medal of Arts from President Obama and the 1996 National Humanities Medal from President Clinton. Rita Dove is Commonwealth Professor of English at the University of Virginia.

Margaret Drabble, DBE is a novelist and critic, born in Sheffield in 1939. After a brief and inglorious career as an actress with the Royal Shakespeare Company she became a full-time writer, and has published nineteen novels, most recently *The Dark Flood Rises* (2016). Her work has been translated into many languages. She has also published various works of non-fiction, including biographies of Arnold Bennett and Angus Wilson, and edited the Fifth and Sixth editions of the *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985, 2000.) She is married to the biographer Michael Holroyd, and has three children from her first marriage to the actor Clive Swift.

Lyndall Gordon is the author of seven biographies, including *Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family's Feuds*, *The Imperfect Life of T. S. Eliot* and most recently *Outsiders: Five Women Writers Who Changed the World*. Amongst her awards are The British Academy's Rose Mary Crawshay Prize and the Cheltenham Prize for Literature. She has also written two memoirs, *Shared Lives* and *Divided Lives: Dreams of a Mother and Daughter*. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and lives in Oxford, where she is a Fellow of St Hilda's College.

Rachel Hadas is the author of more books of poetry and essays than she can quite count. Her most recent poetry collection is *Questions in the Vestibule* (2016, Northwestern University Press); her verse translations of Euripides' two Iphigenia plays will be published by Northwestern in 2018. The recipient of honors including a Guggenheim Fellowship, an American Academy of Arts and Sciences Award in Literature, and the O.B. Hardison Poetry Prize from the Folger Shakespeare Library, Rachel Hadas is Board of Governors Professor of English at Rutgers University–Newark.

Adrienne Kalfopoulou has had work published on Sylvia Plath in *Women's Studies*, an *Interdisciplinary Journal*, and *Plath Profiles*. She is the author of two poetry collections, and a book of essays, *Ruin, Essays in Exilic Living*. A third poetry collection, *A History of Too Much*, will be published in 2018. She is a poetry and non-fiction mentor for the Mile-High MFA program at Regis University, and heads the English Program at Deree College in Athens, Greece. Some of her work is available at: www.adriannekalfopoulou.com

Reeve Lindbergh, a daughter of aviator-author Anne Morrow Lindbergh, was born in 1945 and grew up in Connecticut. She graduated from Radcliffe College in 1968 and moved to Vermont, where she lives near St. Johnsbury with her husband, writer Nat Tripp. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines and periodicals including the *New York Times Book Review*, *The New Yorker* and *The Washington Post*. She is also the author of two dozen books for children and adults. Her next book, *Two Lives*, about her family past and rural present, will be published by Brigantine Media in 2018.

Ian McEwan has written two collections of stories, *First Love*, *Last Rites*, and *In Between the Sheets*, and fifteen novels, *The Cement Garden*, *The Comfort of Strangers*, *The Child in Time*, *The Innocent*, *Black Dogs*, *The Daydreamer*, *Enduring Love*, *Amsterdam*, *Atonement*, *Saturday Solar*, *On Chesil Beach*, *Sweet Tooth*, *The Children Act* and *Nutshell*. He has also written several film scripts, including *The Imitation Game*, *The Ploughman's Lunch*, *Sour Sweet*, *The Good Son*, *The Innocent*, *On Chesil Beach* and *The Children Act*. He won the Booker Prize for *Amsterdam* in 1998.

Gardner McFall is the author of *The Pilot's Daughter and Russian Tortoise* (poems), an opera libretto entitled *Amelia* (commissioned by Seattle Opera), and two children's books. She edited *Made with Words*, a prose miscellany by May Swenson, and wrote the Introduction for the Barnes & Noble Classics edition of Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*. For over a decade she taught Children's Literature at Hunter College/CUNY, and lives and works in New York City.

Jeffrey Meyers has written fifty-four books, thirty-one of which have been translated into fourteen languages and seven alphabets, and published on six continents. In 2012 he gave the Seymour lectures on biography at the National Libraries of Australia. He has recently published *Remembering Iris Murdoch* in 2013, *Thomas Mann's Artist-Heroes* in 2014, *Robert Lowell in Love* and *The Mystery of the Real: Correspondence with Alex Colville* in 2016.

Andrew Motion was the UK Poet Laureate from 1999 to 2009. He is the co-founder of the Poetry Archive, and now teaches at Johns Hopkins University; he lives in Baltimore. His book-length elegy for his parents, *Essex Clay*, is published in the Spring of 2018.

Martha Oliver-Smith was born in Rhode Island into a family of writers, scholars and artists. She earned an MA in literature from the University of Nevada at Reno and an MFA in writing from the Vermont College of Fine Arts. She taught high school English and college writing courses for 36 years before retiring to write the biographical memoir *Martha's Mandala* (2015), based on her grandmother's life as an artist who struggled with mental illness. She lives with her husband in Vermont where she is working on a second memoir about her mother, the author Martha Bacon.

Tim Parks is a novelist, essayist, travel writer and translator based in Italy. Author of fifteen novels, including the Booker short-listed *Europa*, he has translated works by Moravia, Calvino, Calasso, Machiavelli and Leopardi. While running a postgraduate degree course in translation in Milan, he writes regularly for the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Review of Books*. His many non-fiction works include the bestselling *Italian Neighbours* and *Teach Us to Sit Still*, a memoir on chronic pain and meditation. His critical work includes the essay collection *Where I'm Reading From*, and most recently, *The Novel, A Survival Skill*, a reflection on the relationship between novelists, their writing and their readers. His most recent novel is *In Extremis*.

Philip Pullen was born and brought up in Coventry and is familiar with most of the haunts of the young Philip Larkin. He studied at University College, Swansea and the University of Leicester and holds a PhD in the sociology of education. He spent most of his working life teaching in further and higher education and also served for 10 years as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). He is a committee member of the Philip Larkin Society and is currently working on a biographical study of Eva Larkin, making use of the extensive Larkin Archive located in the History Centre, Hull.

Hugh Macrae Richmond has degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, and is Professor Emeritus of English at the University of California, Berkeley, where he heads the Shakespeare Program devoted to "Shakespeare in Performance" and staging some forty plays, with five video documentaries in national distribution: *Shakespeare and the Globe*, *Shakespeare's Globe Theatre Restored*, and *Shakespeare and the Spanish Connection* as well as *Milton By Himself*. He has published *Shakespeare's Sexual Comedy*, *Shakespeare's Political Plays*, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*

Reviewed, Shakespeare's Theatre, as well as *Renaissance Landscapes, Puritans and Libertines*, and *The School of Love*. The Program's two websites are Shakespeare's Staging and Milton Revealed.

Dale Salwak is professor of English literature at Southern California's Citrus College. His publications include *Living with a Writer* (Palgrave, 2004), *Teaching Life: Letters from a Life in Literature* (2008) and studies of Kingsley Amis, John Braine, A.J. Cronin, Philip Larkin, Barbara Pym, Carl Sandburg, Anne Tyler and John Wain. He is a recipient of Purdue University's Distinguished Alumni Award as well as a research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He is also a frequent contributor to the (London) *Times Higher Education* magazine and the *Times Educational Supplement*.

Kenneth Silverman (1936–2017), a native of Manhattan, was Professor Emeritus of English at New York University. His books include *A Cultural History of the American Revolution; The Life and Times of Cotton Mather; Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance; HOUDINI!!!; Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse; and Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage*. A fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he has received the Bancroft Prize in American History, the Pulitzer Prize for Biography, the Edgar Award of the Mystery Writers of America, and the Christopher Literary Award of the Society of American Magicians. He has loved the poetry of Walt Whitman since, at sixteen, he heard his English teacher read aloud, "Give me the splendid silent sun."

Ann Thwaite has spent her life as a writer, with two spells of teaching in Japan. She wrote and reviewed children's books for many years. She and her husband Anthony have lived in Tokyo, Richmond-upon-Thames, Benghazi and Nashville, Tennessee, but have been settled in Norfolk in East Anglia for the last forty-five years. Her five biographies, of Frances Hodgson Burnett, A.A. Milne (Whitbread Biography of the Year 1990), Emily Tennyson, the poet's wife, and the father and son P.H. and Edmund Gosse (Duff Cooper Prize, 1985) have all been highly praised. *Goodbye Christopher Robin* (from her Milne life) is now a major motion picture and mass market paperback.

Anthony Thwaite had early success as a poet, publishing widely while he was still at Oxford. His *Collected Poems* was published in 2007 and his most recent book, *Going Out*, when he was eighty-four. He was a BBC radio producer, literary editor of the *Listener*, the *New Statesman* and *Encounter*, and has lectured and taught in many countries. He was awarded an OBE for services to poetry, and both he and Ann are Fellows of the Royal Society of Literature and have

honorary degrees from the University of East Anglia. Hull University awarded him an honorary doctorate for his work on Philip Larkin, whose poems and letters he has edited.

David Updike is Professor of English at Roxbury Community College, Boston. He is the author of two collections of short stories, *Out of the Marsh* and *Old Girlfriends*. His stories and essays have been published in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *The John Updike*. He has written six children's books and a young adult novel, *Ivy's Turn*. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with his wife Wambui, and is the father of one son, Wesley.

Part I

Biographical

1

Shakespeare's Mother(s)

Hugh Macrae Richmond

Within great achievements we can often detect the contributions of talented women. Pierre Curie was even outdistanced by his wife Marie. Eleanor Roosevelt now earns her own recognition alongside her husband's. Rosalind Franklin's photographs provided data for the Nobel Prizes of the "discoverers" of DNA. We still talk of the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*. But no one has ever talked of Mary Arden's contribution to the plays of her son William Shakespeare. Yet, despite the popular view that we know very little about Shakespeare, there is something relevant known about his antecedents. His grandfather, Richard Shakespeare, was a tenant farmer of a branch of the prominent Warwickshire Arden family. His son John was more ambitious, moving to Stratford to develop his skills as a craftsman and entrepreneur, with sufficient talent, sociability, and ambition to work his way up the municipal hierarchy to become its head, aided on the way by marriage into the genteel family who were his father's landlords. Their upper-class connections would inspire his own ultimate success in sharing their gentility through the award of a heraldic crest. His son William carried that social climbing to the ultimate pinnacle of official appointment to the royal court of King James I.

His mother Mary Arden's resilient character suggests what she could contribute to the potential for William's meteoric career. Her father was prosperous, and though she was his eighth child it was she that he designated as his executor and a principal heir. The view that she and her husband were illiterates conflicts with their numerous legal and administrative responsibilities. Another shared trait of the married couple was inheritance of rooted Catholic family traditions, for which the Ardens even suffered executions. This ominous maternal context invites the careful elusiveness of William's communication of any personal political and theological views.

Socially Mary Arden was well above her husband in social rank, and she was certainly temperamentally and physically resilient. She lived about seventy years, outliving her husband after bearing eight children, a likely model for feminine dynamism, reflected in her son's registration of his high expectations of women in both his life and art. The fact that he married a woman eight years his elder suggests acceptance of female superiority in sexual relationships, a ratio also present in the pattern of the adulterous romance with the Dark Lady outlined in the *Sonnets*, in which the Lady seems to have held the initiative to a disconcerting degree.

However, it has often been assumed by critics that an author's life and professional aims have little to do with the nature and status of his writings. Feminists have also urged us to admit the irreducible patriarchy of Elizabethan life and letters, supposedly reflected in Shakespeare's plays. As for mothers in the scripts, the very title of my colleague Janet Adelman's influential study, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origins in Shakespeare's Plays*, suggests the negative readings they may receive. The blurb summarizes that book thus: "In her original and highly charged account, Adelman traces the genesis of Shakespearean tragedy and romance to a psychologized version of the Fall, in which original sin is literally the sin of origin, inherited from the maternal body that brings death into the world." In Adelman's account, Shakespeare's confrontation with maternal power has devastating consequences both for masculine selfhood and for the female characters in whom that power is invested: the suffocating mothers who must themselves be suffocated. Ironically, the seeming corroboration of such a sinister status lies in Puritan tirades such as John Knox's hysterical rodo-

montade against *The Monstrous Regimen of Women*—in which, paradoxically, he is denouncing the dominance (regimen) of many great Renaissance monarchies by women rulers, from the time when Marguerite de Navarre headed France during her brother Francis I's imprisonment by the Emperor Charles V. That successful regency (ended by her securing of her brother's release) provided a precedent for the far longer Regency of France by Francis's daughter-in-law Catherine de Medici—at the same time as England was ruled by Mary I, and later when Elizabeth I also ruled in England, while threatened by Mary, Queen of Scots from her northern kingdom. So that domestically and politically it could be said that William Shakespeare experienced something approximating to matriarchy at all levels of society.

Looking at Shakespeare's scripts we find his experience of womanhood in general, and mothers in particular to be a central feature, unlike their minimal roles in the work of his nearest contemporaries in talent and achievement: in their best-known plays neither Christopher Marlowe nor Ben Jonson reflect deep concern with women's family status as mothers. By contrast the numerous examples of mothers in Shakespeare's plots invites creation of a whole range of subcategories of distinctive family structures in which mothers are decisive—present, or even when absent. For some mothers are literally too powerfully present, others disastrously absent; some prove evil, while several prove essential to the happy resolution of story lines, while victims like Juliet, Ophelia and Cordelia notably lack supportive mothers.

The easiest mothers to dispose of are the disastrous ones, since they do not reflect any great insights into maternal misconduct born of first-hand experience: they are mere caricatures manipulated to suit plot designs, not felt knowledge of feminine wickedness. I have in mind Tamora, the ruthless Queen of the Goths in *Titus Andronicus*, or the wicked queen who, in the interest of her daughter, tries to kill the more attractive Marina in *Pericles*; and her analogue, Imogen's enemy in *Cymbeline*. There is little to be learned from these stereotypes. A little more interesting are failed mothers, such as Lady Capulet, who deserts her daughter Juliet at a time of crisis, to support her husband's fixation on Juliet's forced marriage—with almost no index of motivation. It is very revealing that the most interesting group of questionable mothers in Shakespeare is

defined by their over-concern with family well-being, and particularly with that of their sons: Constance relentlessly presses the claim to the English throne of her son Arthur in *King John*, to poor effect; Gertrude's over-emotional fixation on Hamlet complicates his concerns with her behavior, and it undercuts his capacity to act rationally, as when he kills Polonius in her bedroom. Volumnia's obsession with the guiding of the military reputation of her son Coriolanus verges on coercion, and it leads audiences to a misreading of the hero's autonomy in his actual consistently positive actions.

Paradoxically it is just this near morbid interference with male autonomy that marks out the next, more positive maternal category in Shakespeare: the successful manipulators, who resolve the calculated tangles which beset their male dependents. I have in mind the Countess in *All's Well* who contrives the overcoming of her son Bertram's resistance to her ward Helena's love for him. Even more impressive is the triad of afflicted mothers who confront Richard III, and whose chorus of curses heralds his defeat at Bosworth. Less obvious is Queen Isabel who proposes her intervention in the Anglo-French treaty which ends the war in *Henry V* by the marriage of her daughter, a similar role to that of the Abbess whose intervention ends *The Comedy of Errors*, and to Thaisa's, who achieves a similar resolution in *Pericles*—all three being women endowed with matriarchal status and social power.

One of the great paradoxes of mothers' roles in Shakespeare is that some of the most significant are the ones that are not there. Their absence creates a deep distortion of each of the play worlds involved: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Henry IV*, *Othello*, *King Lear*. In the comedies the young women lack maternal advice in the face of male volatility, in dealing with which their seemingly widowed fathers are of little assistance—only the mental agility of the heroines can save them and their obtuse lovers from such disasters as those which befall the naiver Juliet, Ophelia and Desdemona. Some fathers even constitute a threat to their daughters, from excessive interest in their marital options, as seen in the ridiculous will of Portia's father; or the racism of Brabantio in repudiating Desdemona's marriage to the Moor, Othello; or Lear's frustrated over-reaction to Cordelia's inept emotional obtuseness at his

abdication, on the occasion of her carefully planned marriage. Of course the most extreme example of disastrous unconfined paternal interest is the incestuous relationship in the opening scenes of *Pericles*, whose discovery almost precipitates the hero's murder. For Shakespeare, a competent mother's absence from the scene constitutes the risk of impending social ruin, as a result of paternal volatility or incompetence.

So how does Shakespeare express his sense of effective maternal interventions? With sons there is usually an uneasy sense of intense monitoring of the kind seen in Gertrude and Volumnia. With daughters the mothers are far more poised and effective, as we see with the Countess of Auvergne, who unfailingly supports Helena in the face of her son Bertram's outrageous conduct, which is frustrated by help from another mother, Diana, who saves her daughter from Bertram's predations by bonding with the Countess and Helena. A similar matriarchal dominance appears in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*—though Ann Page escapes it to marry the suitor of her own choice, while the other males are totally outmaneuvered by the Wives. In *All Is True*, a similar matriarchal authority marks the Catholic Queen Katherine of Aragon, who successfully protects her daughter Mary from Henry VIII's erratic behavior, and consistently displays superior insight and wisdom to her male persecutors, before the heavenly derived masque that provides a mystical celebration of her virtue.

There remains one erratic mother in the canon, Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare accurately indicates that she is a mother, despite questioning by such scholars as L. C. Knights in his notorious essay "How Many Children Has Lady Macbeth?" In trying to mock A. C. Bradley's literalism about the reality of Shakespeare's characters, Knight neglects the fact that, historically, Macbeth's wife did have a son by a previous marriage, Lulach, who inherited Macbeth's throne by his mother's provenance. The play's text reflects this strikingly in her notorious lines of reproach to Macbeth's cowardice in refusing to assassinate King Duncan:

What beast was't, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would

Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place
 Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
 They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
 Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
 I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this.

[I.vii.47–60]

We must be shocked by this subversive assertion, but it reflects the same determination to ensure a virile outcome at any price which we see in Joan of Arc in *Henry VI Part 1*; and in Queen Margaret of Anjou throughout *Henry VI*, in advocacy of her son and husband; and above all in Volumnia's cult of her son Coriolanus's heroism.

Shakespeare has no doubt that women are as capable as politicians as on the battlefield itself, a view initiated in his longest female role and one of his earliest, Queen Margaret, who figures prominently in all four plays of his first English tetralogy—the three parts of *Henry VI* plus *Richard III*—in which she appears successively as romantic heroine, wife, political Machiavel, mother, and prophetess. This type of multiple characterization of a uniquely talented historical woman climaxed in Shakespeare's deployments of Cleopatra. The latter may be Shakespeare's supreme celebration of female dominance, and it is notable that at the height of her power in the play Cleopatra chooses to incarnate herself as the goddess Isis, publicly presiding over her family. Isis is seen as the ideal mother and wife, and patroness of nature and magic. Isis is identified as the mother of the falcon-headed Horus, symbol of kingship. Isis is also known as protector of the dead and goddess of children. Her name Isis means "throne" as seen in her head-dress, which is a throne. Personifying the throne, she also represented a pharaoh's power: he was depicted as her child, sitting on the throne she provided.

In this iconic kind of role we encounter other authoritative mothers in Shakespeare's last plays, ones probably written near or after his mother's death in 1608: *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. In the first we see the

supposedly dead Thaisa, buried at sea by her husband Pericles, restored to life and enshrined as a priestess by her rescuers, only to be restored to her mourning husband at the end of the play. This resurrection recurs even more memorably when Hermione returns from the death that even the audience had been deceived into believing has occurred in the first act. In *Shakespeare, Catholicism and Romance*, Velma Bourgeois Richmond points out that Hermione first reappears as a seeming statue in a chapel, echoing the concealed icons of the Virgin Mary banished by the Reformers, and her resurrection suggests the transcendence of mortality by that figure. This transcendence is the key to the much-favored artistic theme of the assumption of the Virgin, favored by such painters as Titian and Rubens. However, the motif is even more literally echoed in the deathbed masque honoring Queen Catherine of Aragon, near the end (IV.ii) of what was probably Shakespeare's last play, *All Is True*—now usually known as *King Henry VIII*. There the complex stage directions require the Queen's coronation by "six persons in white robes" who are "inviting her to a banquet" and "promising eternal happiness." The recurrence of this pattern of maternal resurrection, in the years following the death of Mary Arden Shakespeare, suggests the playwright's thoughts about such an option for mothers like his own, to become revered figures comparable to his stage characters. At least the awareness of the possibility of the transcendence of mortality perceived by most commentators in his last plays is most vividly incarnated in their maternal figures. Throughout his career Shakespeare treats the role of mothers with the most profound attention, surely embodied from his own experience of a resilient mother.