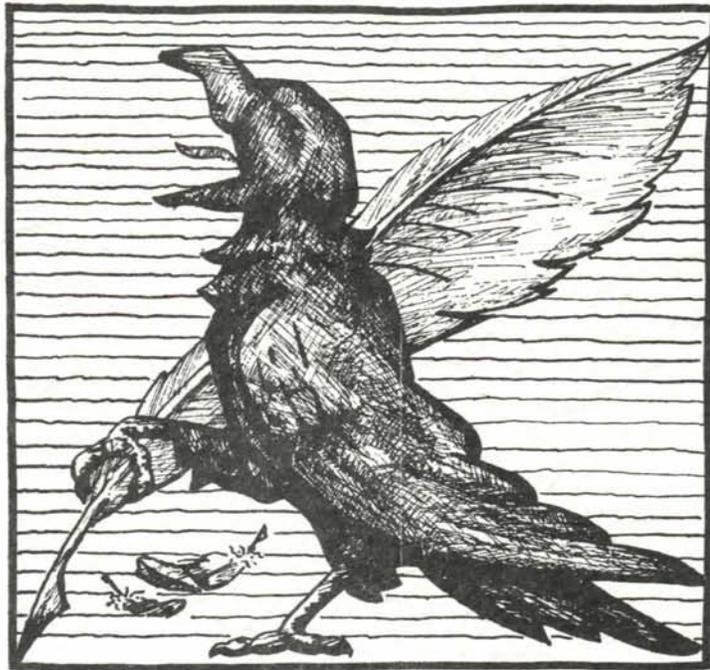


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About anyone so great as Shakespeare, it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.

—T. S. Eliot

What we have to do is to be forever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions.

—Walter Pater

The problems (of the arts) are always indefinite, the results are always debatable, and the final approval always uncertain.

—Paul Valery

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From the Editor

As you hold the new issue of *The Upstart Crow* in your hand, you no doubt have noticed that the current number has lost weight—in volume, if not in substance—compared with the memorial issue. When the *Crow* was just a glimmer in Bill Bennett's eye, he conceived of it as a semiannual. Actually, our little periodical has been published biannually throughout most of its brief history in 1978, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984, and now in 1986. We hope to change all that in subsequent issues, which will be published annually.

The reduced format of the present volume is deceptive. The 1987 volume will also number roughly 115 pages, totalling over 230 pages of *Crow* text for a given two-year period, as opposed to roughly 150 pages of text for a given biannual volume in the past. In short, your money will be buying more *Crow*, more frequently. Subscription rates will remain the same—\$12.00 for two issues.

James R. Andreas

Anne (Aside)

by Neil Graves

Indeed young men do play his womanly parts.
But such is no new thing, nor of his art,
meriting talk. And all those sleek sly words
you question leave us alone to open such lines
as none other write for one woman's eyes to say.
He stays, we can tell, gracious and kind, always
asking after his Heart, and the Janus pair
he feared would rend us dead, but yet have not.
If we have erred to decline the stage he proffered
then and again, missing such scenes in the town,
let our mind play out, against nothing, triplet notes
yet trillingly sweet. In other character
we'd spit some modern thing, stride at the press
of long flat homely hours once given us here.
But the stream is gentle. Our place will soon be his.
Then limbs and lines can join, and others absorbed
may stray out here where brittle weeds tangle and mat,
where the cold months pass, and fragile chartreuse lace
frets gardeny banks into spring. We shall be hard
with him, if we will; but one without reason should not.
Look for some other spot in the river or sky,
woman. Keep yourself level. Keep yourself busy and quiet.

Augustinian Roots in Shakespeare's Sense of Tragedy by Roy Battenhouse

One of the significant features of Shakespearean tragedy is imagery that frequently echoes Bible language or paradigm, even when the play's setting is pagan. A striking instance of this is Antony's "Last Supper," as Middleton Murry in 1936 termed it when noting how Antony's fellowship in IV. ii. carries echoes of Christ's premonition of death. When Antony requests, "Well my good fellows, wait on me tonight./Scant not my cups"; and again, "Tend me tonight, . . . Haply you shall not see me more"; and again, "Tend me tonight two hours," do we not have an analogy to Christ's Passover and Gethsemane? Antony concludes by saying that "tomorrow. . .I'll expect victorious life." The parallel in Plutarch is only this:

So being at supper (as it is reported) he commanded his officers and household servants that waited on him at his bord, that they should fill his cuppes full, and make as much of him as they could: for said he, you know not whether you shall do so much for me tomorrow or not. . . it may be you shall see me no more, but a dead bodie. [But to "salve" their grief he added that he thought "safely to return with victory."]¹

Shakespeare has evidently enlarged Plutarch's story with overtones of a Christian Passion unknown to Antony and his world. Why so? Is the dramatist asking us to see Antony as a prefigurer of Christian redemption? This is not likely since Antony's "gaudy night" is far from being a godly night; he has proposed his "bounteous" meal to "mock the midnight bell" and "drown consideration."

A more likely explanation of this supper's double-level language is that Shakespeare is inviting us to recall a theological aphorism of Augustine, namely, that "souls in their very sins seek but a sort of likeness to God, in a proud and perverted, and, so to say, slavish freedom" (*On the Trin.* I. xi. 5). In other words, Antony is enacting unwittingly a perverted likeness to Christ, a dark analogy to divine love. Only in an upside-down way is he prefiguring Christ.

This implication is the more evident if we notice, in a preceding scene, a biblical echo Shakespeare puts in Antony's mouth when Cleopatra seems to be forsaking Antony by betraying him into the hands of Caesar, his enemy. With a kind of godly jealousy Antony cries out:

O that I were

Upon the hill of Basan, to outroar
The horned herd. . .

(III. xiii. 126-28)

For Elizabethan auditors this situation would serve to recall that of the troubled godly man in Psalm 22, who cried out:

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? . . . Many oxen are come about me; fat bulles of Basan close me in on every side. They gape upon me with their mouths. . . They part my garments among them. (Prayerbook tr., rptd. in Bishops' bible, 2nd ed., 1572)

This is the well-known Messianic psalm, in which the sufferer, while besieged by wicked men, puts his trust in God to deliver him. (Psalm 68, also, speaks of "Basan" as the hill where God showed his power to deliver his righteous from enemy armies.) But in Shakespeare's play the reference to Basan carries a contrast to the biblical analogy it evokes, since Antony has placed his trust not in a God of righteousness but in Cleopatra, a boggler and Egyptian charmer; hence his response to the "herd" that encompasses him is only a desire to "outroar" them in his anger. What the situation thus presents is an ironic parallel to Christian paradigm. We are asked to see, at one and the same time, an analogy to godly suffering and a perverse imitation of it.

All sins, in Augustine's view, are modes of misdirected love. They are caused by a soul's immoderate inclination to some mutable good. Goods such as bodily pleasure, or worldly fame and honor, or even human souls themselves are misloved unless loved for the sake of God, the *Summum Bonum*. By straying from Him, the soul substitutes a perverse similitude of the divine—pride for exaltedness, or prodigality for true liberality, or a wanton tenderness in place of charity. Yet no soul can altogether escape God's law, since (as Augustine says, quoting Ps. 139) even "if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." Darkened traces of the Creator remain in sinners. Hence Augustine in his *Confessions* (II.[vi.].14) observes: "All pervertedly imitate Thee, who remove far from Thee. . . Behold, thy servant, fleeing from his Lord, and obtaining a shadow." A "darkened likeness of Thy Omnipotency" was what Augustine came to see in the "maimed liberty" of misdirected love.

An illustration of maimed liberty is provided by Shakespeare in the scene of Antony's suicide in the name of "nobleness." The awkward facts are in Plutarch, but Shakespeare has amplified them with typological overtones—e.g., Antony's likening himself to a bridegroom (a metaphor Augustine applied mystically to Christ in *Conf. IV. [xxi.]. 19*, elaborating the

meaning of Ps. 19:5), and then offering his trussed body to "Egypt," proclaiming himself "the greatest Prince of the world." Such details, for an Elizabethan auditor, evoke obliquely the memory of Christ who made his Passover from Egypt to a kingdom not of this world, by offering to God redemptive wounds in hands, feet, and side. The reader, says Andrew Fichter, "is continually made aware of the parody the play will become in the light of Christian revelation."²

Cleopatra's suicide in imitation of Antony's exhibits this moral parody in a feminine mode. The asp at her breast is as monstrous a proof of queenliness as is Antony's self-stabbed belly a proof of lordship. Like Antony, Cleopatra has a pride that will not let her submit to being a public spectacle in Caesar's Rome. A "gibbet" within her private pyramid, therefore, is her substitute for allowing "Mechanic slaves/With greasy aprons, rules and hammers [to]/Uplift us to the view." Her scorn for rules and hammers, however, would suggest to a Christian auditor a contrast to Christ's enduring such a shame because "If I be *lifted up*, I will draw all men unto me" (Jn. 12:32) promises "eternal life" to believers (Jn. 3:14-15). One of the episodes in mystery-cycle drama depicted hammerers nailing Christ to a cross on which he was uplifted. That paradigm has its dark or perverse analogy in Cleopatra's applying an asp to her arm. But more specifically, she becomes a parody of the Virgin Mary when she supplies an asp to her breast and describes this serpent as the "baby" she nurses to give suck to "immortal longings."

Shakespeare has signalled parody through details not found in Plutarch. Plutarch mentioned no asp at Cleopatra's breast or "heaven" in her mouth. He did tell, in two sentences, of a basket of figs brought to her by a laughing countryman. But Shakespeare has made specific the quality of this countryman's laughter. The "joy of the worm," he clownishly tells her, has "no goodness" in it and "it is not worth the feeding." Then he jests about a woman "something given to lie," who made "a good report of the worm" but is not to be believed. He that believes what she says, this clown remarks, will never be saved by what she *does*—here echoing the story in Genesis of Adam's straying from salvation by believing Eve's report and copying her deed. Thus through the clown's jest Cleopatra is being identified typologically by Shakespeare as "old Eve," the "eastern star" of Charmian's Egyptian imagination, a twisted version of the Christian star of Mary the Virgin.

And alongside Shakespeare's echo of Genesis, the Bible's first book, is an echo of its last book. Cleopatra's cry, "Husband, I come" is her unintended parody of Revelation 22:17, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come" in reference to a heavenly marriage to Jesus the Lamb who offers "a new heaven and a new earth." Indeed, as Ethel Seaton pointed out in *RES*, 1946, many echoes of St. John's Apocalypse punctuate Shakespeare's play from beginning to end,

providing what Seaton termed "sunken bells," sounding under the tide and swell of the poetry. What these echoes amount to can not be dismissed as mere "local color," as some critics evasively suppose. The dramatist's imagery is signalling, rather, a more-than-Plutarchan perspective for viewing Antony and Cleopatra.

Dolora Cunningham in *SQ*, 1955, when studying the means by which Cleopatra prepares for death, found a strange similarity to penitential disciplines of Christian preparation for immortality. Each of the stages prescribed by medieval theologians for repentance—conviction of sin, contrition of heart, faith that God will forgive, and a purpose to amend one's life—have a kind of shadowy parallel in Cleopatra's resolve to "begin to make/A better life." But since Antony is her god and his lips her heaven, the analogy to Christian penance becomes one by which readers can perceive, says Cunningham, a Realism that *measures* and *places* her version of transcendence. "The lovers' perverse location of the absolute in themselves and their love amounts to an easily recognizable parody of the Christian life." I think Augustine would have said so too, although he would also say that whether or not one's outlook is Christian, any truly humane understanding must recognize in tragic lovers a misdirected love that achieves not "liberty" but its maimed version. Shakespeare, like Augustine, understands the dark mimicking of "new heaven" that accompanies prodigal imaginings.

So, likewise, did Dante. A recent book by Anthony K. Cassell (*Dante's Fearful Art of Justice*, Toronto, 1984) points out that the tragedies which Dante and Virgil together view inside the walls of the City of *Dis* are those caused by sins against Reason but also (as the imagery of punishment shows) by a perverse mimicking of God. The damned, Cassell explains, "remain in some way *images* of the Godhead whom they rejected":

. . . In *Inferno* v, Francesca buffeted like a dove figures a lustful counterpart to the loving symbol of the Holy Spirit. . . Farinata's punishment (in *Inferno* x) points ironically to Christ upright in his tomb. . . Caiaphas lies crucified like Christ (but nailed to the ground) among the hypocrites. The thieves in *Inferno* xxiv-xxv metamorphose into. . . inversions of the crucified Christ as prefigured, familiarly, by the brazen, healing serpent hung on Moses' staff. . . God's image prevails even to the depths where Satan's triune heads dripping tears and bloody droll are a clear, intentionally banal, parody. In this Dante follows the Augustine tradition which held that sin itself was but a perverse imitation of the Deity (pp. 9-10).

Dante's poetic art, Cassell argues; has figural "secondary" meanings which as "sunken metaphor" intermittently blend into the literal story to structure an interplay between levels of significance (pp. 6, 27). "The literal level of the

Inferno is not reducible to its secondary senses but is deeply dependent on them; these other levels are. . .vertical meanings which go *above* and *beyond*" (p. 14).

I find particularly interesting Cassell's comments on Dante's depiction of Farinata, a great war-chief of Italy's Ghibelline faction. Dante the wayfarer encounters the ghost of this historical personage among the heretics of the City of Dis, Augustine's Earthly City of discord, where dwell typologically at various levels those souls who have turned from God to serve human glory. Here Farinata is seen rising from a hot tomb, erect above the flames from the waist up. The iconography suggests an analogy to Christ rising out of his sepulchre, and since Dante also terms the tomb an "ark," a further analogy to Noah's voyaging above the flood is suggested. But Farinata's attitude, by contrast to those paradigms, is one of pride and contempt for his enemies; and the smoke from the flames dims his light and sight. The situation emblematically is thus a dark analogy of faith and resurrection. While Dante the wayfarer sees Farinata as a "great soul," Dante the poet places such "magnanimity" as an Earthly City's valiancy. The scene's imagery illustrates, as Cassell notes, St. Paul's saying that "though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing," and St. Gregory's gloss that in such a case the fire of fining only "afflicts torment and not cleansing." Dante's scene conveys a "profound moral parody. . .of the liturgical *visitatio sepulchri*"; the "He is not here, For he is risen!" is parodied and reversed in Farinata's appearance (p. 24).

It seems to me one can speak similarly of Shakespeare's depiction in *Hamlet* of the warlike ghost whose appearance arouses in young Hamlet an eagerness to know in I. iv. "why the sepulchre/Wherein we saw thee quietly inurned/Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws/To cast thee up again." This imagery suggests an analogy to Jonah or to Christ's resurrection, but at the same time in a dark version that makes "night hideous" and "horridly" shakes Hamlet's disposition. This ghost is like Farinata in having his abode in sulphurous flames, and in speaking proudly with a contempt for his enemies. To Horatio and Marcellus, earlier, he seemed to have "majesty" but also to be an "extravagant and erring" spirit if judged by Christian lore. Cherrell Guilfoyle, in *Comp. Drama*, 1980, analyzed the opening score of *Hamlet* as an antithesis to the angelic visitation in the Coventry nativity play. May we not call it, rather, a *dark* analogy that parodies the divine?

Whereas Dante was protected from Farinata's speech by relying on Virgil to guide him, we see Hamlet self-victimized by a rash idolizing of his father's ghost, with the result that he resolves to wipe away all "saws of books" to serve revenge. Here Hamlet's vow is presented by Shakespeare in language that suggests a perverse likeness to that of Moses: Hamlet calls for

"tablets" to write down for memory a "one commandment" that reductively *apes* the "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" which Moses received from God. Then the action moves to Hamlet's demanding three times a covenant-swearing from his friends, in a pledging to "secrecy" on a sword-hilt. Editors who notice that Hamlet speaks of "grace and mercy" as he presents the sword-hilt have suggested that it is being used as a Christian cross. But if so, is not Shakespeare asking us to see the irony of sealing with the cross a secret so different from the secret of salvation to which the Bible's triune-God asks our commitment? While Hamlet's triple invocation imitates Biblical *form*, the *content* of his request perverts grace and mercy. The iconography is that of analogy, but in a perverse version.

In a similar way, the iconography of the play's ending is that of sacrament imitated in a deadly mode. A rapier "anointed" with poison and a wine-cup spiced with a "pearl" of poison are a parody of holy warfare and holy communion. The symbolism of Christ as pearl is mimicked. A kind of Black Mass is being celebrated, its ministers a Claudius and a Hamlet divided against each other (as typical of Earthly City factionalism), yet joined in ministering a cup of death and damnation. None of this symbolic imagery was in the story Shakespeare inherited from Saxo and Belleforest. Has not Shakespeare invented it to give us an Augustinian perspective on the mimicking of God that characterizes misdirected human loves and purposes mistook? Nevertheless, all human erring (as Augustine explains) falls within the providence of a divine order that permits wayward souls their perverse forms of goodness, which reflect in a shadowy way a divine law they cannot escape. When men fight against each other for temporal dominion, Augustine wrote, they are bound fast in a fellowship that flings them "headlong by an equal weight of desire into the same abyss, and are *united* in their ways and deserts" (quoted by Cassell, p. 22, italics mine).

Analogy as a principle of dramatic construction was inherited by Shakespeare from his medieval predecessors. Its manifold reflection in his art has been illustrated in Joan Hartwig's recent book *Shakespeare's Analogical Scene: Parody as Structural Syntax* (1983). Hartwig rightly defines parody as a reductive mimicking. But I think we need to distinguish two rather *different kinds* of parody. We can all recognize in the Porter scene of *Macbeth*, for instance, a reduction of Macbeth's tragic plight to comic terms. This is a case of *linear* and subsequent analogy; it amplifies the story's literal level. But if we examine an earlier scene in which Macbeth commits himself to celebrating "Pale Hecate's offerings," is there not evident another level of reductionism? That scene, which begins by his saying "When my drink is ready, . . . strike upon the bell" and ends by his saying "The bell is sounded" parodies a Christian Mass, in which traditionally a bell is sounded to mark Christ's

offering to God of his body and blood as a Saving sacrifice. Macbeth's vision of the handle of a dagger as emblem of his mission is an evident perversion of devotion to the Cross. Macbeth's ending the scene with "It is done" is like that of Dr. Faustus in Marlowe's play, where the hero ritualizes his commitment to fantasies of power through a pact sealed with *consummatum est*, Christ's words from the cross. Parody of this kind involves what we may call an upside-down analogy or vertical parody, distinguishable from the kind of linear analogy to Faustus's behavior presented comically by the yokels Robin and Dick in Marlowe's subplot.

Hartwig's book focuses on parody presented on a *horizontal* plane of literal story, whereas I am urging that we pay attention to a *vertical* plane as well, since the art of Shakespeare, like Marlowe's, includes both. If I may cite an example, Hartwig observes with fine insight, it seems to me, the comic parody of Romeo's plight offered in a subsequent scene by the Nurse's blubbering of woe. But overlooked by Hartwig is the parody of holy communion which Romeo presents us by his drinking a poisoned cup with the words, "Here's to my love!," on a Thursday night which, for Christian auditors, carries memories of Christ's Last Supper and a love higher than that of "paramour" devotion. Romeo's self-sacrifice amounts to a mimicking of divine sacrifice; it involves a religious and moral reductionism. The nurse's woe, on the other hand, is simply a reducing of Romeo's level of heroic emotion to its analogy at a level of domestic farce. Both cases call for audience perception through analogy. But the one kind invites theological reflection, while the other parodies upper-class folly in lower-class versions.

Indiana University

Notes

¹Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), V, 307-08.

²*Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), p. 110.

"The Stock of Barabas":
Shakespeare's Unfaithful Villains
 by Earl Dachslager

Shakespeare's major villains are villains not only or even mainly because of the villainous deeds they commit (the deeds being symptomatic) but rather because of their heretical religious beliefs, more especially their image as infidels. In Shakespeare's time, infidelity would have meant, or included, not only atheism, i.e., free-thinking in questions of religious belief, but also false *belief*, meaning adherence to an established religion but an illicit one.¹ For the Christian Church, the term "faith" in Shakespeare's day, as in ours, could be taken to mean "the dynamic and vital context of man's meaningful dependence upon the activity of God in Christ."² In other words, those who did not accept the divinity of Jesus would have been considered infidels whether they were, strictly speaking, atheists or not; thus the term "infidel" would designate not only skeptics and non-believers but also Greeks (i.e., pagans), Jews, and Moslems. For all practical purposes, as well as dramatic, the three were one: Jew, pagan, Turk (or Arab) would have been defined as the infidel. Theologically the distinction originates with Paul for whom there is no salvific distinction between Jew and Greek; for neither is there any cause for Christ, "a stumbling block for Jews and folly to Gentiles" (I Cor. 1:22-23). It is, then, the image of the atheist (or non-believer) backed with the image of the Jew-Greek-Turk (or false believer) that comprises the total image of evil in Shakespeare's plays. In the discussion which follows, my purpose is to show how Shakespeare's villains conform to this image and to show the dramatic source or origin of this image. The villains I discuss include Goneril, Regan, Edmund, Caliban, Aaron, Shylock, and Iago.

Of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, the major villains of *King Lear*, it has been observed that all three are materialists and opponents of orthodox Christian belief; Heilman, for example, refers to Regan's "nontheistic view of life" and of Goneril says, "she is faithful to this world and her logical view of it."³ In contrast, the beliefs of Edmund are more complex and, therefore perhaps, more ambiguous, but Edmund is nonetheless as much an unorthodox believer as Lear's two wicked daughters. While it is true to say of Edmund that (again quoting Heilman) "in one form or another, he does show much more awareness of the idea of divinity than any other evil character," it is the "one form or another" that is relevant.⁴ In this respect, Edmund stands closer to Caliban or Shylock than to Aaron or Iago who, like Goneril and Regan, believe in nothing but self. Nevertheless, as much as any of the others, Edmund is essentially a pagan, a worshipper of false gods and contemptuous

of "the ordered pieties of Christian society. . . ." Thus Goneril, Regan, and Edmund all conform to "atheistical" rather than "saved" paganism, although as noted there are important differences between them, Edmund being the more purely pagan and Goneril and Regan the more purely atheistic, which is to say that Edmund is a *mis*believer and Goneril and Regan, *dis*believers.⁶

It is significant that very nearly the opposite holds true for the respective literary sources of the characters: Plexirtus, the source for Edmund, is a believer in nothing and therefore closer to Iago's skepticism than to Edmund's (in *King Lear*) paganism. On the other hand, Gonorill and Ragan, as the two evil sisters are designated in the *Leir* play, express at times traditional religious beliefs and values. Ragan feels a "hell of conscience" in her breast, and Gonorill pleads to God for her father's death.⁷ Needless to say, none of the conventional pieties uttered by Gonorill or Ragan in the chronicle play serves to make them faithful; the point is that Shakespeare, in his version of the Lear story, has eliminated all, or almost all, references by the two sisters to orthodox belief, the one exception being Regan's "O the blest gods!" exclamation to Lear, although, as often noted, this is hardly an expression of sincere piety; indeed, it is closer to the exact opposite.⁸

The fact that *King Lear's* time and place were pre-Christian presented Shakespeare with a problem, a problem he recognized by removing, as noted, the Christian and/or religious allusions by Gonorill and Ragan in the chronicle play and by making Edmund a pagan, i.e., a worshipper of Nature. The problem has direct bearing not only for *Lear* but for the image of villainy in Shakespeare's plays in general, the image being that of the infidel. For if by historical necessity the religious context of a play is to be pagan then what, theologically speaking, is to distinguish good from evil? Here an important distinction has to be made between the paganism of the Roman plays and that of *Lear*, the distinction being, quite strictly, that when we speak of the Roman plays as pagan we mean pagan as virtuous-pagan or virtuous-heathen, what Elton calls "saved."⁹ In contrast, when we speak of *Lear* as a pagan play, we mean anti-Christian or falsely Christian, pagan meaning *unsaved*. Thus Shakespeare's Romans are pagan in one sense, his pre-Christian Britons in another. It is largely this distinction which is the basis of the vexed question of *Lear's* theology—whether it is "a Christian play about a pagan world" or a pagan play with "Christian ideas."¹⁰ In the Roman plays the conflict between good and evil is not a conflict between the faithful and the faithless—Aaron as we shall see is an exception but Aaron is not a Roman—but between the virtuous and the non-virtuous. To put it another way, the issue is predominantly political and ethical, not theological.¹¹

In contrast then with the Roman plays, it is misleading to speak of *Lear* as a pagan play. It is more accurately a pre-Christian play and, as such, presented

its author with the problem of how to characterize good as good in a pre-Christian *and* non-Roman world. The solution was to characterize the good characters as Christian-*like* or, as Elton puts it, "quasi-Christian" or "pre-Christian."¹² Thus, there is the anomaly of Cordelia being a Christian-heathen or heathen-Christian and the general ambivalence of Christian-pagan in *Lear*. In this regard, Battenhouse is close to the truth when he speaks of Cordelia as a Hebrew Biblical character "with a Mosaic devotion to natural justice" who "develops into the gracious suffering servant of Isaiah and Jeremiah" and, following the standard typological reading of the Hebrew Bible, has Cordelia turn out to be "the child who is to enlighten the Gentiles."¹³ Whatever one's response to this reading of the play, it does at least underscore the problem: how to create characters Christian in a pre-Christian world. By the same token, to make the evil characters evil required that they be *un*-Christian since, strictly speaking, they could not be infidels in the same sense as Shakespeare's other villains, there being no fidelity in the play for them to act in contrast with. Thus the ambivalence of Edmund, who believes partly in self and partly in pagan Nature, and the *non*-belief of Goneril and Regan compared with their role models in the chronicle play.

In his essay "Of Unity in Religion" Bacon wrote: "And certainly it is little better, when atheists and profane persons do hear of so many discordant and contrary opinions in religion; it doth divert them from the church, and maketh them to sit down in the chair of the scorers." Bacon is here of course alluding to the opening lines of Psalm 1: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly/Nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. . ." Typically, then, the role of the villain is to act contrary to the Psalmist's requisites: the villain is one who walks in the counsel of the ungodly, stands in the way (i.e., manner) of sinners, and sits in the seat of the scornful, suggesting disbelief in the normative doctrines of Christianity. In this respect, Hamlet's advice to the players that one purpose of playing is to show "scorn for her own image" bears direct relevance to the role of the villain in Shakespeare.

To play this role, villains must of course commit villanous deeds: they lie, they seduce, they deceive, they murder. And while such deeds are certainly symptomatic of their villainy, they are more effect than cause and in themselves are insufficient to account dramatically for the "presence" (to use Hazlitt's word) of Shakespeare's wicked characters. Quite apart from the deeds they commit (non-villainous characters also commit immoral and/or illegal acts) stands the *character* of the villain, which is determined by religious scorn and the consequent conviction that the universe is governed by capricious or malicious or undetermined forces; and therefore there is nothing to stop one—indeed there is everything to encourage one—to play

the villainous role. Any character, then, who presents the image of infidelity according to orthodox Christian teaching is to be designated a villain.

Thus for Shakespeare and his audience the distinction between villain and non-villain would have not only suggested distinctions between legal and illegal, order and disorder, natural and unnatural, but also (and here we see why Shakespeare is really *not* our contemporary) between orthodox belief and disbelief, faith and faithlessness, and piety and impiety. Shakespeare's villains are villains because they are infidels, members, in Iago's words, of "all the tribe of Hell." They are villains because of their bad theology. Even in Utopia, where religious belief is largely a question of personal choice, the one strict exception to religious liberty is "that no one should fall so far below the dignity of human nature as to believe that souls likewise perish with the body or that the world is the mere sport of chance and not governed by a divine providence."¹⁴

The direct source, in literary-dramatic terms, of the Renaissance villain is Barabas, the hero-villain of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.¹⁵ While the importance of Marlowe's villain as a major source of Shakespeare's villains is general knowledge, the precise significance of this source as the particular, theological image of Shakespeare's villains has yet, I believe, to be fully realized or understood. The literary origins of Barabas are by no means certain. There is no extant non-dramatic source for the play or the character, and the possibility that Marlowe based Barabas on some historical personage is just that—a possibility.¹⁶ Spivack has argued that the character of Barabas originates in the traditional Vice figure of medieval drama, at least in part; and while Barabas no doubt owes *something* to the Vice character, his image as a villain is far removed from that primitive type of dramatic evil. The Vice, in fact, is hardly recognizable in Barabas's role. As Spivack admits, "For so much of his role the homiletic stage offers no precedent, and Marlowe's genius is free."¹⁷

Barabas, however, was not created out of thin air. Marlowe's genius was to recognize, and dramatize, the potent image of evil for his day in the form of the infidel, specifically that of the Jew; not the Vice but the Jew, plain and simple.¹⁸ Here, if anywhere, is the sure sign of Marlowe's dramatic genius: his recognition that the image of evil in the collective mind of his audience coincided with the stereotype of the Jew as that stereotype was handed down from the Middle Ages. In Barabas, we have the literary source for Shakespeare's villains and, beyond that, the embodiment of the historical and theological source as well.

Spivack is correct when he says of Barabas that "His Jewishness defines his condemnation," but is incorrect when he adds, "but it [his Jewishness] condemns him much less for his faith than for his Jewish greed, pride, and

insolence."¹⁹ For one thing, Barabas's faith would have been seen in Shakespeare's time as *lack* of faith, as anyone familiar with the Pauline epistles would recognize, or, at best, perverted faith; and, for another thing, his (as Spivack oddly puts it) "Jewish greed, pride, and insolence" would have been understood as quite inseparable from his faith. As with Shylock, Barabas's stubbornness is a product of "his Jewish heart." Masinton is closer to the truth about Barabas when he writes, "Marlowe's audience would have regarded this exotic figure as the antichrist," a villain by virtue of, not in addition to, his faith.²⁰ Barabas is a villain *because* he is a Jew; thus Barroll's conclusion regarding Shylock—that his atheism is "formally realized in his Renaissance status as a Jew"—applies no less to Barabas.²¹

The long conflict between Church and Synagogue, Sinai and Calvary, had created the image of the Jew—misbeliever, antiChrist, Satan, Judas, materialist—which the Renaissance inherited. As G.K. Hunter forcefully explains: the Jews "rejected Christ and chose Barabbas, rejected the Saviour and chose the robber, rejected the spirit and chose the flesh, rejected the treasure that is in heaven and chose the treasure that is on earth. . . ." ²² If we require an exact non-literary source, a *locus classicus* for the Renaissance villain, it would be the alleged culpability of the Jews for the execution of Jesus and the consequent "divine curse": "His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matt. 27:25). As the Christian knight of Malta explains to Barabas:

If your first curse fall heavy on thy head,
And make thee poor and scorn'd of all the world,
'Tis not our fault, but thy inherent sin.

(I. ii 107-109)

It was Marlowe's genius to see in all of this historical-theological process the formula for the complete villain, or almost complete. For it was also Marlowe's genius to add one more term to the equation, one that was to prove indispensable for the image of the Renaissance villain: the Machiavel. In short, Marlowe Italianized the Jew, made him the symbol not only of material greed, stubbornness, infidelity, and betrayal, but also made him self-interested—politically, as well as morally and theologically—corrupt. As Machiavel himself proudly announces in the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, "I count religion but a childish toy/And hold there is no sin but ignorance" (*Prolog.* 14-15). As a Jew in a Christian and therefore hostile world, Barabas is forced into a policy of self-interest for his own survival, and thus like Aaron, Shylock, Iago, Edmund, Goneril, Regan, and Caliban, is given some personal justification for his villainy. As Harry Levin says, "Barabas is a man with a grievance, but his retaliation outruns the provocation."²³ As much could be said for any of Barabas' literary heirs, although the degree to which they are

provoked, as with Shylock, Edmund, Goneril, or Regan, would seem to determine, or at least affect, the justness of their retaliation.

As if to make the efficacy of Barabas's role as villain even more dramatically effective, Marlowe introduces another stereotyped embodiment of infidelity and, in this case, the added bonus of sexual lust: the Turk, Ithamore, whom Barabas buys on the slave market and who aids Barabas in his politic schemes. Barabas at first considers purchasing a Moorish slave but finally chooses the Turk. Before making up his mind, Barabas asks the Turk where he was born, to which Ithamore, whose name contains the obvious pun, replies, "In Thrace, brought up in Arabia." "So much the better," responds Barabas, "Thou art for my turn." (II. iii. 130-131) With the combination of Jew, Machiavel, and Arab-Turk-Moor, Marlowe has the best of all possible villains and the mold from which every villain in Shakespeare's plays would be cast. As Barabas says of himself and Ithamore:

. . .villains both
Both circumcised, we hate Christians both.

(II. iii. 216)

The image represented by Barabas resulted from the long theological conflict between Church and Synagogue, a direct result of the triumph of Christianity and the relegation of non-Christian faiths to the status of pariahs.

At this point it is necessary to sketch in the roles of Aaron, Shylock, Iago, and Caliban as part of this tradition and then to conclude with some comments on *King Lear*. Aaron is notable in the history of stage villains since here, for the first time, the image of the Jew, the Machiavel, and the Turk (The Turk's passion stereotypically was sexual as the Jew's was material) are combined into one character. In Aaron's first speech, beginning "So Tamora" (*TA* II. i. 9-25), we see Shakespeare adding the lust of the Moor to the combined Machiavel and Jew. Fiedler reminds us that "Aaron's very name . . . connects him with Jewish tradition," and goes on to properly state that Aaron, "like the tribe of Shylock. . . is even described as 'misbelieving' and 'irreligious', an enemy of the True God."²⁴ I might add here that the name of Barabas's Turkish slave, Ithamore, "probably comes from the Biblical Ithamar, who was one of the sons of Aaron."²⁵ Aaron is thus Moor, Jew, and Machiavel, the union of Barabas and Ithamore. Because his world is ostensibly Roman and not Christian, Aaron, unlike Barabas or Shylock, cannot curse those "damned Christians," but he does, nevertheless, play the part, even if it means being out of his time. "I know," he says to Lucius,

Thou art religious,
And hast a thing within thee called conscience,

With twenty popish tricks and ceremonies,
Which I have seen thee careful to observe,
Therefore I urge thy oath; for that I know
An idiot holds his bauble for a god
And keeps the oath which by that god he swears. . .

(V. i. 74-80)

Aaron is the villain not because he is a Moor but because as such he is faithless, one who like Barabas is "the incarnate devil" and like Shylock "the very devil incarnation," with the verbal play on "nation."

That Shylock is an image of the infidel goes of course without saying, or should. Like Aaron or Barabas, Shylock is an alien in a hostile world, one who is driven to revenge for the injustices done to him; he is not unlike Edmund, Goneril, and Regan in this regard. What is crucial here (and the basis of much silly commentary about Shylock) is that he is mistreated *because* he is a Jew, not because he is a moneylender or because he seeks to kill Antonio. "The Elizabethan word 'Jew'," Hunter reminds us "like many other words which are nowadays taken in an exact racialist sense ('Moor' and 'Turk' are the obvious other examples), was a word of general abuse, whose sense, in so far as it had one, was dependent on a theological rather than an ethnographical framework."²⁶ The Jew, or his counterpart, was for Christians not only a theological necessity but, just as relevant for our purposes, a dramatic necessity: without the infidel there would be no fidelity and, hence, no "Christian" drama.²⁷

The image of Barabas, Aaron, and Shylock is not far removed from that of Iago. Undoubtedly the verbal complex called Iago is much more than an offshoot of the Machiavellian villain or a scion of the Vice figure. It is also like his predecessors a composite of the diabolic, materialist, and of Judas and the disbeliever. Without some perception of the image of the Jew in the role of Iago, his admonition to Roderigo to "put money in thy purse" makes little or no sense. Further, Iago's speeches are loaded with enough blasphemies and heresies ("Heaven is my judge," "By Janus," "Blessed fig's end," "Blessed pudding," "Divinity of Hell!") to put him securely in the seat of the scornful. Iago's self-seeking deceit—

. . . others there are
Who, trimm'd in forms, and visages of duty
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves. . .

(*Oth.* I. i. 49-51)

inevitably calls to mind Barabas'

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,
 And when we grin, we bite; yet are our looks
 As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.

(II. iii. 20-22)

Nor is Iago innocent of one of the primary strategies of the diabolic villain (recalling Richard III as well as Shylock):

When devils will the blackest sins put on
 They do suggest at first with heavenly shows. . . .

(II. iii. 351-52)

Nationally, of course, Iago is an Italian, or Venetian, but theologically he is an infidel, characterized by traits pertinent to Barabas, Aaron, and Shylock. Fiedler's description of Aaron as "a kind of Iago in blackface" is to the point. In what is to my way of thinking a brilliant observation, Norman Mailer, in *The Presidential Papers*, speaks of Iago, not Shylock, as "the despised image" of the Jew.²⁸ As a final comment on Iago as infidel, we must add the generally overlooked implication of his name which, like Aaron's, would have linked him with the Hebrew Bible. In the source for *Othello* the character Shakespeare calls Iago is, of course, unnamed. In giving him the name Iago (or Jago) Shakespeare may have been attempting to connect him with Jacob, which in Italian is Giacobbe; or even with Isaac, which according to Cecil Roth, was generally translated during the Renaissance as Gaio (Jow-o). Since there is no such name in Italian as Iago, we can assume the name was intended to imply a type, here a Biblical (Hebrew) figure.

Before returning to Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, let us turn briefly to Caliban, who, Frank Kermode tells us, represents the natural man, "some sort of ignoble savage."²⁹ But Caliban is more than the image of natural man; he is also the image of unfaithful man. In the same way, his role as villain is not simply that of base or uncivil nature in contrast with Prospero's "higher" nature, but rather it is that of unorthodox misbelief in contrast with Christian orthodoxy. Caliban's infidelity is a result of his birth as well as his belief. His mother is, or was, an Algerian, so that racially Caliban is a North African, specifically an Algerian. To the Elizabethans this would have meant being associated with the Turks and Jews, both of whom were prominent residents of Algiers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1518 the Turks captured Northern Algeria, including the town of Algiers (Shakespeare calls it "Argier") and remained in control until the French took the city in the early nineteenth century. In Shakespeare's time, because Algiers was controlled by Turks, i.e., Moslems, rather than by Christians, it was a haven for persecuted Jews exiled from the Christian countries of Europe, Spain in particular. Ben-Zvi writes: "The general expulsion forced Spanish Jewry to seek refuge in

other lands. . . .The so-called 'western' lands—that is, North Africa—were nearest to Spain, and for lack of any alternative that is where the exiles went."³⁰ Thus, in addition to his association with the pagan savages of the New World, Caliban, at least on his mother's side, would have been associated with the infidels (Jews and Moslems) of North Africa.

If Caliban's mother belongs to the ranks of the faithless (it is notable that the only two characters in Shakespeare whose mothers are referred to as "unhallowed" are Caliban and Shylock), then all the more so does his father. Prospero thus prefaces Caliban's entrance into the play:

Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth!

(*Temp.* I. ii. 319-20)

The association with Algiers, with Satan, with heretical theology (the worship of Setebos) all serve to align Caliban with Shakespeare's other infidel villains, perhaps most obviously Shylock. Both Shylock and Caliban seek revenge against the Christians who persecute them and both, to some extent, are finally pardoned by acts of Christian "mercy," acts which as misbelievers they would be deemed incapable of. Caliban's final lines—his exit lines—stand in striking contrast with those that preface his entrance, and they point most clearly, in spite of some disclaimers, to his eventual conversion:

. . .I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool!

(V. i. 295-98)

Perhaps the most telling symptom of Caliban's infidelity is his association with slaves and slavery, the word "slave" being next to "devil" the most commonly used epithet for Caliban. The word "slave" of course did not carry the meaning for Elizabethans that it has for modern audiences, nor did it simply mean one who is in bondage. Because the centers and sources of the slave trade, as seen, for example, in *The Jew of Malta*, were the Middle East and Northern Africa, the word essentially connoted a non-Christian, again the infidel. From the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70, Jews, along with other non-Christians, were traded as slaves throughout Europe. This was particularly true of the Roman campaigns in Asia Minor, and of the Jews taken into slavery in those campaigns, most probably wound up in Italy.³¹ But it is the theological value of the word "slave" in Shakespeare's time, more than the geographical, that is crucial here. Fr. Flannery has this to say about the matter:

The doctrine of Christianity's spiritual superiority over Judaism, which St. Paul exemplified by the Old Testament figures of Jacob and Esau and Sara and Agar (Rom. 9:13; Gal. 4:22-31), initiated a tradition that, over the centuries, increasingly took on temporal applications. The canons and codes forbidding Jews public office and Jewish testimony against Christians largely derived their inspiration from it. In the thirteenth century, Innocent III (1198-1216) spoke of the 'perpetual servitude' of the Jews, and the Third Lateran Council (1179) of the 'subjection' of Jews to Christians. St. Thomas Aquinas, . . . adhering to the feudal conceptions of his time, validated the principle of Jewish 'servitude' to both Church and State. . . . 'It would be licit, according to custom,' he wrote, 'to hold Jews, because of their crime, in perpetual servitude. . . .'³²

Thus, when Caliban, or any other of Shakespeare's villains, is referred to as a "slave" it is well to bear in mind what this term meant for Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Caliban is a religious heretic, a descendant of "the stock of Barrabas," and it is this, above and beyond his image as a natural or primitive monster, that determines his role as villain. And while Marlowe's Barabas is the direct literary progenitor of these villains, nevertheless it is important to recognize the historical-theological type, or stereotype, that formed Marlowe's villain and, in turn, Shakespeare's. As Howard Cole writes, ". . . even the most direct literary source provides leading questions about rather than a full explanation of the work itself."³³ The "leading question" here is *why* Barabas? Why did *that* character become the prototype of the Elizabethan villain? The answer is, as I have suggested, because it provided a ready-made antagonist to "good," meaning specifically Christian belief and practice. It is in this context and against this image that we need to place Shakespeare's major villains, including those of *King Lear*, if we are to fully appreciate their roles and the effects of their roles.

As noted at the outset, Shakespeare seems deliberately to have removed from the roles of Goneril and Regan nearly all references to any sort of Christian beliefs, a number of which appear in the sources. In this sense, he left Goneril and Regan theologically neutral, neither faithful nor unfaithful, orthodox nor unorthodox. Goneril and Regan are, of course, unnatural, unkind, ungrateful, cruel, etc., but nevertheless they lack the sort of precise image of religious unorthodoxy that we noticed in Shakespeare's other major villains; and I think it is this lack which partially at least accounts for the relative ambiguity of their roles as villains, in particular the debate over whether they are not somehow or someway justified in their conduct toward their father.³⁴ The one exception to this spiritual neutrality—it being the one which perhaps proves the rule—is Albany's attack on Goneril:

See thyself devil!

Proper deformity shows not in the fiend,
So horrid as in woman.

(IV. ii. 59-61)

These lines, nearly a direct lift from the chronicle play, must strike us, I think, as almost a cliché, a parody of the evil female from Queen Margaret to Lady Macbeth to the Queen of *Cymbeline* ("O most delicate fiend!/Who is't can read a woman?"). Somehow Albany's words seem too blatantly melodramatic, and therefore false, for Goneril or her sisterly counterpart, whose evil in both cases is too dense and complex to be explained on merely "fiendish" grounds. Goneril and Regan, no more than Iago, are not devils or fiends (demi-devils at best), but they *are* diabolic, the result of their image as complete atheists.

In Edmund's case, however, Shakespeare wrought a radical change from the character in the source, Plexirtus, whose evil doings are the result of "poysonous hypocrisie, desperate fraude, smoothe malice, hidden ambition, and smiling envie" along with his being a bastard and "unnatural."³⁵ There is nothing in the source to indicate on Edmund's part religious heresy or infidelity, to prepare us for the Edmund who, in addition to being Machiavellian and self-seeking, is also, as Bullough says, "the seventeenth century 'atheist' delineated later by Samuel Butler."³⁶ *That* Edmund is wholly Shakespeare's creation, and as such he falls in the line established by Barabas and ending with Caliban.

Muir, for example, has noted that "Aaron has something in common with Edmund," by which I gather he means Edmund's characteristic combination of lustfulness and self-seeking ambition.³⁷ Although Edmund has been compared with the bastard in *King John*,³⁸ his role is much more analagous to that of Aaron (who also shows at the end some humanity) or, equally so, to Shylock, as can be seen by comparing Edmund's plea for his legitimacy—"Wherefore base?/When my dimensions are as well compact/My mind as generous, and my shape as true,/As honest madam's issue"—with Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech. Likewise Edmund is a loner, as loveless and friendless as any of his counterparts. Whether by choice (Iago) or by "background" (Aaron, Shylock, Caliban), the pattern set by Barabas holds true—the villain plays the victim of a hostile world, one who more often than not *learns* his villainy from those who persecute him (or her). Should one catch a hint in Edmund's "Sir, I shall study deserving" of Shylock's "The villainy you teach me I shall execute. . . ."?

But of all Shakespeare's villains it is Iago with whom Edmund has most obvious affinities, although there are some perhaps not-so-obvious differences. In making a comparison between Edmund and Iago, Elton argues that Edmund is unique as a Shakespearean villain (Don John being an

exception), because he is anti-Pelagian while Iago, and the others, are pro-Pelagian. "Man, according to Iago, has complete freedom, an idea not expressed by Edmund and one which St. Augustine labored, in his anti-Pelagian writings, to eradicate."³⁹ Edmund's villainy, in other words, seems the result of *some* sort of determinism, although it is hard to say exactly what—his bastardy? Nature? Fortune?—whereas Iago's villainy is the result of just the opposite—" 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus." In contrast, Goldberg argues that Edmund, as Iago, is evil simply because it is his nature to be evil, and cites the "This is the excellent foppery of the world" speech as evidence. The solution to this apparent, or perhaps real, contradiction in Edmund's role as villain can be found, I believe, in the source, where, as we have seen, Edmund's evil is given to be the result solely of his nature (lower case) without any reference to Nature as a deity. While the following passage from the *Arcadia* is obviously a form for the role of Edmund, it could just as readily serve as a pattern for Iago:

For certainly so had nature formed him, and the exercise of craft conformed him to all turnings of sleights, that though no man had lesse goodnes in his soule then he, no man could better find the places whence arguments might grow of goodness to another: though no man felt lesse pitie, no man could tel better how to stir pitie: no man more impudent to deny, where proofes were not manifest; no man more ready to confess with a repenting manner of aggravating his owne evil, where denial would but make the fault fouler.⁴⁰

By his very act of disclaiming for himself belief in *any* form of deity, Edmund all the more demonstrates its validity. "An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!" By his very denial of the role of the conventional villain, Edmund manages to act the role of the "new" man, a "modern" prophet of moral relativity. Edmund would thus appear to exemplify the villain who is evil simply because it is his nature to be evil, and therefore any virtuous act he might commit would go against his natural grain: ". . . some good I mean to do/Despite of mine own nature." Yet ironically, by the very act of disclaiming any supernatural soliciting for his villainy, Edmund all the more typifies conventional and traditional religious heresy; for by denying any "heavenly compulsion," "spherical predominance," or "planetary influence" as the cause of villains, fools, and knaves, he is also denying any such influence for good. "I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing." There being no cause for evil, there is likewise no cause for good. For the villain the only divinity that shapes his or her ends is his or her self. Or if there is a divinity, it is a reflection and creation of the villain's own

nature, a projection, as we might say, of his or her psyche. "Thou thoughtest," God tells the wicked in Psalm 50, "that I was altogether such a one as thyself." This being the case, the villain is free to *serve* her or his own ends without fear of incurring divine wrath or, for that matter, reward. The primary distinction of the Renaissance villain is that he or she will serve no ends or means except his or her own. So Iago, Edmund, Caliban, all the others, are experts at "throwing but shows of service on their lords," a distinction which derives essentially from their characteristic infidelity, their disbelief in a law higher than nature or self or both. In the end, Edmund, Iago, Goneril, Regan, Caliban, Shylock, all of Shakespeare's villains, would pay allegiance to the admirable (for them) but scornful words of an equally great, if not greater, infidel and villain—Milton's Satan:

. . .but of this be sure,
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being contrary to his high will
Whom we resist.

(PL, I, 157-162)

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Notes

¹George T. Buckley, *Atheism in The English Renaissance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1932), pp. 49-50. See also *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, pp. 17-18 for a standard definition of "atheism."

²*A Handbook of Christian Theology*, p. 128.

³Robert B. Heilman, *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1948), pp. 272-273.

⁴Heilman, p. 275.

⁵Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and The Allegory of Evil* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), p. 413.

⁶W.R. Elton, *King Lear and The Gods* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1966), pp. 115-117, 121.

⁷Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963), VII, cf. pp. 361, 394. Other expressions of conventional belief can be found at lines 131, 474, 491, 494, and 925.

⁸Heilman, p. 273.

⁹Elton, p. 115.

¹⁰Kenneth Muir, ed. *King Lear* (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 1vi. Text references are to this edition. See also Bullough, VII, p. 305. A.L. French, *Shakespeare and the Critics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972), is a good critique of the controversy since Bradley over *Lear* as a Christian-redemptive play.

¹¹J. Leeds Barroll, *Artificial Persons* (Columbia, South Carolina: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1974), p. 234. As Barroll here argues, Cassius' relativism and "Lucretian materialism" compares with Edmund's belief in Nature as a deity, but as Barroll goes on to explain, Cassius is a more complex character whose villainy is as much a matter of political and psychological causes as theological (cf. pp. 235-238). See also Harold S. Wilson, "The Order of Nature: *Julius Caesar*,"

in *Discussions of Shakespeare's Roman Plays*, ed. Maurice Charney (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1964), p. 55. Wilson says of the events of *Julius Caesar*: "It is a pattern of moral causes and their effects in this world. The World of *Julius Caesar*—as of *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*—is the natural order of man, which is a moral order, but the religious sanction of that order is not invoked. It is simply man's world as he knows it by the light of natural reason—as Plutarch knew it, and Julius Caesar, Brutus, Cassius, and the rest."

¹²Elton, p. 37.

¹³Roy Battenhouse, "Shakespearean Tragedy: A Christian Approach," in *Approaches to Shakespeare*, ed. N. Rabkin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), pp. 206-207.

¹⁴*Utopia*, ed. E. Surtz, S.J. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 134.

¹⁵First performed February, 1591, and repeated frequently thereafter (36 performances) over a five-year period. See *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. R.A. Foakes and R.T. Rickert (Cambridge: CUP, 1961), p. 16 *et. passim*. Also Richard W. Van Fossèn, *The Jew of Malta* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. xii. Text references are to this edition.

¹⁶David M. Bevington, "The Jew of Malta," in *Marlowe: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Clifford Leach (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 147.

¹⁷Spivack, p. 348.

¹⁸This simple, unassailable fact has led to some confusion about the so-called moral ambiguity of the play when in fact there is nothing ambiguous about Marlowe's intentions at all. The Christians are *per se* good (or at least *right*) and infidels (Jews and Turks) are *per se* bad (or at least *wrong*). See for example Bevington, "The Jew of Malta," *op. cit.*, especially pp. 156-157. Also Irving Ribner, *Introd., The Complete Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), p. xxxii.

¹⁹Spivack, p. 347.

²⁰Charles G. Masinton, *Christopher Marlowe's Tragic Vision* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio Univ. Press, 1972), p. 59.

²¹Barroll, p. 238.

²²"The Theology of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*," in *Christopher Marlowe's The Jew of Malta: Text and Criticism*, ed. I. Ribner (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1970), p. 183.

²³Harry Levin, *The Overreacher* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 60.

²⁴Leslie Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), p. 178.

²⁵Douglas Cole, "Barabas the Jew: Incarnation of Evil," in Ribner, *The Jew of Malta*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

²⁶Hunter, "The Theology of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*," *op. cit.*, p. 185.

²⁷Cf. James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism* (New York: Atheneum, 1974); also J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "Judaism: The Christian Problem," *Face to Face: An Interreligious Bulletin*, XI (1984). The Christian, as Professor Rylaarsdam notes, "finds it impossible to define himself without reference to the Jew" (p. 4).

²⁸New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1963, p. 190.

²⁹*The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Random House, 1954), p. xxxviii.

³⁰"Eretz Yisrael Under Ottoman Rule, 1517-1917," in *The Jews: Their History*, ed. L. Finkelstein (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 399.

³¹Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews*, rev. ed., (New York: Schocken Books, 1970), p. 136.

³²Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 95.

³³Howard C. Cole, *A Quest of Inquirie: Some Contexts of Tudor Literature* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1973), p. 31.

³⁴French, pp. 152-167.

³⁵Bullough, VII, p. 404.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 303.

³⁷Arden edition, p. x1ii.

³⁸Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of King Lear* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1972), pp. 84-85.

³⁹Elton, p. 137.

⁴⁰Bullough, VII, p. 407.

Duncan's Duplicity by R.W. Desai

During the last three centuries the widely prevalent critical view of Duncan has been that of a benign and kindly old king whose murder is rendered all the more horrendous by his harmless and benevolent nature.¹ This attitude is best summed up by Kenneth Muir in his introduction to the play: "By making the victim old and holy and by passing over his weaknesses, Shakespeare deliberately blackened the guilt of Macbeth." Muir goes on to point out that "Macbeth in the Chronicle has a genuine grievance against Duncan, who by proclaiming his son Prince of Cumberland went against the laws of succession, and took away from Macbeth the prospect of the throne, which he had every reason to hope for. . . . Shakespeare suppresses these facts, partly because he wished for dramatic reasons to accentuate Macbeth's guilt."²

But does Shakespeare suppress these facts, or are we responsible for suppressing them, perhaps because familiarity with the play has diverted our attention from the early scenes to focus on the later and more dramatic scenes of Duncan's murder and Macbeth's overpowering sense of guilt and punishment? Those of us who have taught *Macbeth* know this to be true. If at the end of the semester the students are asked questions on the more gripping scenes of the play, most of them score excellent marks, but if asked questions on say Act I scene ii, most of them fumble. For example, they have no difficulty answering the following: What reason does Lady Macbeth give for not murdering Duncan herself? Who first discovers Duncan's corpse? How many times does Banquo's ghost appear? But questions like these often prove baffling: From where does the Thane of Rosse come? What is the name of the Norwegian king? What sum of money is he required to pay in order to ransom the dead bodies of his soldiers for burial?

A careful scrutiny of the opening scenes of the play with particular reference to the Duncan-Macbeth relationship, in the light of the Scottish law of succession, will result in some significant aspects of Duncan's conduct coming to light. Duncan is not simply a sacrificial victim. We see him before we see Macbeth. On this occasion we observe him listening to glowing reports concerning Macbeth's valor; and when we do see Macbeth in the next scene, he is on his way to report to Duncan. Though brief, the meeting between the two men is revealing. This is the only occasion they are seen together, and I suggest more attention be paid to this contact than has hitherto been done.

I shall argue that while Shakespeare in the early scenes of the play does not emphasize Duncan's duplicity, he does not suppress it either; and that the

readiness with which we grant to Macbeth the distinction of being a tragic hero and not an unmitigated villain like Richard III is explainable not simply on account of his acute sense of sin and guilt heightened by a far-ranging imagination, important as these factors are, but also on account of an uneasy feeling we experience that Duncan's behavior toward Macbeth is not as exemplary as might be wished for. Accordingly, when Macbeth murders Duncan, mingled with our pity for him as a helpless victim is the feeling that he is partly responsible for the regicide Macbeth perpetrates.

Likewise I shall try to show that after the murder of Duncan, both Banquo and Macduff emerge as self-seeking rivals of Macbeth and do not hesitate to jettison all moral scruples in the pursuit of their own ends. In this murky atmosphere Macbeth's bloody career can be construed as the desperation of the beast in the jungle who must kill in order not to be killed. Such a Macbeth, a man fighting for his life, is very different from the usual representation of him as one who kills innocent victims out of an insatiable lust for power.

In Act I scene ii we are made aware of the many dangers that threaten Duncan's kingdom.³ First, Malcolm is almost captured by the enemy; second, "the merciless Macdonwald," a rebel against Duncan and assisted by "Kernes and Gallowglasses," is on the verge of victory; third, a Norwegian lord takes advantage of the prevailing turmoil to begin "a fresh assault" on Duncan's hard pressed army; fourth, Duncan gets bad news from Fife, Macduff's county,⁴ where "Norway himself," later called "Sweno, the Norway's King," has taken Fife and hoisted his banners over the land; and fifth, the Thane of Cawdor, "that most disloyal traitor," has joined hands with Sweno in his campaign against Duncan. Thus at the outset of the play we see Duncan's kingdom tottering, with Duncan himself, Malcolm, and Macduff indebted to Macbeth for their survival.

Contrasting with their ineffectuality are Macbeth's ability and courage. He alone converts a battle lost into a battle won by destroying Macdonwald, repelling the Norwegian lord, and bringing Sweno and his accomplice the Thane of Cawdor to their knees. Moreover he swells Duncan's coffers with "ten thousand dollars" as tribute from Sweno for obtaining permission to bury his dead soldiers. Due to Macbeth's intervention, the description of a conflict that began with the word "doubtful" (line 7) ends with the word "won" (line 69).⁵

The first hint of Duncan's duplicity occurs when we hear him couple, for no ostensible reason, the names of Macbeth and Banquo. The Sergeant has just given a vivid and firsthand account of Macbeth's singlehanded prowess on the battlefield when Duncan asks, "Dismay'd not this/Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?" Hitherto the Sergeant has not referred to Banquo; he

has spoken of Macbeth as "brave Macbeth" and "Valour's minion." Aware of the danger attendant upon permitting any single army officer to appropriate all the honors of the battlefield, Duncan pragmatically dilutes Macbeth's achievements by dividing the glory between him and Banquo. (As we shall see, Duncan repeats this tactic in a subsequent scene.) Out of courtesy to the King, the Sergeant, continuing his speech, switches over to the plural pronoun: "So they/Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe," but as if to further emphasize Macbeth's unaided feat, Rosse enters with a fresh account of Macbeth's redoubtable performance, describing him as "Bellona's bridegroom," with no reference to Banquo.

The next instance of injustice to Macbeth occurs when the promise of reward commensurate with his military feats is not fulfilled. In Act I scene iii Rosse and Angus bring the new title "Thane of Cawdor" to confer upon Macbeth. They recall his heroic exploits, reiterating in their encomiums the adjective "thy" and the pronoun "thee": "The news of thy success"; "Thy personal venture"; "He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks"; "Thyself didst make,/Strange images of death"; "Every one did hear/Thy praises"; "To give thee from our royal master thanks"; "To herald thee into his sight,/Not pay thee." After such eloquent recognition of the loyalty Macbeth has shown toward Duncan, it is fitting that Rosse should say,

And, for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor.

It is clear that the salutation "Thane of Cawdor" is only "an earnest," not the actual reward which should follow. Thus Macbeth (and the audience) expect the reward to materialize in his forthcoming meeting with Duncan in Act I scene iv.

A parallel example from *Cymbeline* may be helpful: when the Queen thrusts her box of drugs into Pisanio's hands she describes it as "an earnest of a further good/That I mean to thee," and follows this with the promise, "I'll move the King/To any shape of thy preferment such/As thou'lt desire" (I. v. 65-66, 70-71).

On Macbeth's actual appearance before Duncan (I. iv), the disparity between the promise and its non-fulfillment cannot but strike us forcefully. Duncan greets him with a fulsome speech abounding in terms that signify a recompense in proportion to Macbeth's loyalty to him. Within the space of just seven lines (ll. 14-21) Duncan uses the following words: "worthiest," "recompense," "deserv'd," "proportion," "payment," "due," and "pay." He upbraids himself for "ingratitude" but does nothing to redress the balance except to ratify the title "Thane of Cawdor" already conferred upon Macbeth

by Rosse and Angus. "My worthy Cawdor" are the last words we hear Duncan uttering to Macbeth. Yet Angus had earlier told Macbeth explicitly that the title was only a token of Duncan's thanks, not the actual payment:

We are sent,
To give thee from our royal master thanks;
Only to herald thee into his sight,
Not pay thee.

(I. iii. 100-3)

Far from being "an earnest of a greater honour," this title is all the payment Macbeth gets. Understandably, Duncan's speech elicits from Macbeth a rejoinder in consonance with Duncan's emphasis on "payment," in which Macbeth speaks stiffly of "service" and "duty" (I. iv. 22-27). Duncan's reply is replete with promises denoting enlargement and increase:

Welcome hither:
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing,

but we see no evidence of his wanting to translate these verbal assurances into tangible reality. We may well wonder why Duncan, the king, should have to "labour" to give Macbeth an adequate reward when it was really Macbeth who had laboured for Duncan on the battlefield. In his address to his audience at this time, Duncan categorizes them under four headings: "Sons, kinsmen, Thanes,/And you whose places are the nearest" (ll. 35-36). Macbeth has been given an additional thaneship, that of Cawdor, but he has not been promoted to the fourth category, "you whose places are the nearest," which would have been that of earl. The Scottish hierarchical order was as follows: king, earl, thane, son of a thane, and laird (or franklin).⁶ Clearly Macbeth has not been rewarded with an earldom, for this would have brought him dangerously close to the crown.

Duncan next pays Banquo a tribute that, in a sense, undercuts whatever recognition he has accorded Macbeth:

Noble Banquo,
That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known
No less to have done so, let me infold thee
And hold thee to my heart.

By, according to Banquo, a share of honor equal to that of Macbeth, Duncan is deliberately undermining the heroic, almost epic, achievement of Macbeth as reported earlier by the Sergeant and then Rosse. And if Banquo deserved no less of a reward than did Macbeth, why did not Duncan confer upon him an

additional thaneship? In other words, Duncan, an astute ruler, is weaving a web of expectation and partial fulfillment in which his leading subjects get enmeshed, each one hopeful of advancement and suspicious of his rival. This of course is a dangerous game to play: when Duncan seems most successful—all his foes having been vanquished—he is killed by his own general or, to put it yet more bluntly, he is "hoist by his own petard."

But what brings matters to a head is Duncan's pronouncement of his eldest son Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland, obviously a well calculated move to forestall the possibility of Macbeth, Duncan's first cousin, succeeding him to the throne.⁷ In order to make the investiture of his son with this title seem less shrewd than it is, Duncan widens the scope of the honor to include all those present at the ceremony:

. . . which honour must
Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
On all deservers.

But is Malcolm a deserver or an heir? Since Duncan has conferred upon him a title he has not yet proved himself worthy of, neither on the battlefield nor in political strategy, it is not on the basis of deserving but primogeniture that Malcolm inherits the title. "The crown of Scotland," George Steevens observes, "was originally not hereditary. When a successor was declared in the life-time of a king (as was often the case), the title of *Prince of Cumberland* was immediately bestowed on him as the mark of his designation."⁸

That Shakespeare's audience was in general ignorant of the Scottish method of succession may be too easy an assumption.⁹ Shakespeare and his audience, without the modern media like newspapers, the radio, and the TV for disseminating information, were nevertheless surprisingly well informed on matters relating to neighboring countries, in particular, Scotland and Denmark. The English-Scottish-Danish triangle was complete with the accession to the English throne of James I, for whom *Macbeth* was specially written. James I was James VI of Scotland, and he married the daughter of the king of Denmark.¹⁰ Like the Scottish law of succession, the Danish law was not strictly that of primogeniture, a circumstance that permitted Claudius, and not Hamlet the son of the old king, to become king on the death of his brother. That Shakespeare's audience must have been keenly interested in the political systems prevalent in neighboring countries is clear from the Archbishop's speech in *Henry V* running into no less than 80 lines in which the Salic law of succession is expounded and the king urged to defy it on the principle set forth in Numbers 27:7 where daughters are permitted to inherit

from their fathers (H 5, I. ii). I give this instance only to show what a living issue laws of succession were to the Elizabethans, a question that no longer captures the interest of most modern audiences for whom these are matters of only historical interest.¹¹

According to the simple law of primogeniture as prevalent in England for example, Duncan's pronouncement of his son "Prince of Cumberland" would have rendered his own assassination futile as far as the murderer was concerned, for the crown would have descended to Malcolm immediately: the King is dead, long live the King. Thus to Shakespeare's audience it must have been evident that had the law of primogeniture by itself been operative, Macbeth's slaying of Duncan would have been meaningful if he had also killed Malcolm. That neither Macbeth nor Lady Macbeth, while conspiring to kill Duncan, says anything about the son's being in the way is an indication of Shakespeare having assumed that his audience knew something of the complicated Scottish law of succession in which primogeniture was not the sole deciding factor. The law of succession in eleventh century Scotland was "old and highly sophisticated":

The country was governed by a wide range of chieftains, each clearly defined by law, from chieftains of minor clans to mormaers [or High Stewards] and petty kings, up to the High King himself. Under Celtic law all such offices were filled by election. The candidate was usually nominated by the current office holder when he felt the approach of death. The heir-elect was known as the tanist. . . .But mere nomination did not ensure succession. The candidate had to be approved by the tribal assembly. . . .The feudal principle of primogeniture was not recognized in eleventh-century Scotland. . . .Instead, and in contrast to the hereditary right of inheritance practised by other nations, Celtic law provided for the election to every office with the admonition that the most worthy be elected.¹²

It is quite likely that a sizeable section of Shakespeare's audience was well informed on these matters, for the play was most probably "written by command as one of the plays to be given before King James I and the King of Denmark during the latter's notable visit to England in the summer of 1606."¹³ Such members of the audience would also have known that the Scottish succession from the ninth century onwards alternated between the two royal lines of the houses of Constantine and Aodh. In fact from 859 A.D. onwards no monarch was succeeded by his son or grandson till 1034 A.D. when Malcolm II "ensured the succession of his own son Duncan, the first instance of succession in the direct line since the mid-ninth century."¹⁴ Thus "to the Celts of Scotland. . .Duncan, not Macbeth was the usurper."¹⁵ If, then, the wiser sort among Shakespeare's audience knew these details, for them—

even before the play began—Macbeth would have had good grounds for resentment toward Duncan, resentment exacerbated by the elevation of Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland. Viewed in the context of this rather complex Celtic setting, Macbeth's lines, "If Chance will have me King, why, Chance may crown me,/Without my stir" (I. iii. 143-44), assume added significance. Macbeth is not in the tenuous position of one who just may be lucky enough for the crown to land in his lap; rather, he is already a legitimate and militarily deserving claimant to the crown, and the prophecy of the witches gives him just the slight impetus needed to perpetrate the murder of Duncan.

At this point a quick look at Duncan's strategy in disarming Macbeth will be appropriate. Act I scene iv opens with Duncan being assured that the traitor Cawdor has been executed, a step that stabilizes his kingdom. Macbeth's entry at this moment is a timely reminder to the audience of the role he played in crushing the alliance between Cawdor and the king of Norway. Duncan's public acknowledgment of his indebtedness to his officers expresses itself in two overtly sentimental acts: he embraces Banquo ("let me infold thee,/And hold thee to my heart") and then openly sheds tears ("My plenteous joys,/Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves/In drops of sorrow"). Yet, immediately after this display of emotion he proclaims his son the heir apparent and, almost in the same breath, declares his intention of being Macbeth's guest that very night. Duncan's political adroitness is at its peak here: his motives appear confused and can be interpreted in various ways according to the politician's art. Hotspur, we recall, dubbed Bolingbroke a "vile politician"; Duncan, more experienced, is a shrewd politician. Sandwiched between demonstrations of special favor and affection for Macbeth and Banquo is the bitter pill that Macbeth has to swallow of Malcolm as tanist. Duncan has shown how to "look like th' innocent flower,/But be the serpent under't" (I. v. 64-5), Lady Macbeth's advice to her husband.

That Macbeth is not duped by these maneuvers comes home to us with terrible clarity in his soliloquy uttered even while Duncan is continuing his blandishments by calling him "My worthy Cawdor":

The Prince of Cumberland—That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
For in my way it lies.

But though Duncan has announced his son's new title as Prince of Cumberland, Malcolm's youth and inexperience prevent him from taking advantage of his position: after the murder of his father, unable to assert himself as the tanist, he is stupefied by the situation and when told by Macduff that his royal father has been murdered, can only ask rather pointlessly, "O!

by whom?" (II. ii. 100). A few lines later he shows some initiative while consulting Donalbain on the best course of action, suggesting that they assume control of the situation,

Why do we hold our tongues, that most may claim
This argument for ours?

but is unable to press home the point, allows himself to be overruled by his younger brother who recommends instant flight, and thus plays right into Macbeth's hands. In the following scene Macduff and Rosse are naturally convinced that such flight confirms their suspicion of the son's being guilty of parricide (II. iv. 25-29). And since Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland stands most to gain from his father's death, the suspicion directed toward him has a strong basis.

Malcolm's ineffectuality in this scene, which is understandable considering his youth, is matched by the selfish and traitorous part played by both Banquo and Macduff. On discovering the body of the king, Macduff proclaims the horror of the crime in vivid language,

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!
Most sacrilegious Murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed Temple
(II. iii. 67-69)

but says nothing about the succession, a matter of vital importance. Whereas Macduff and Banquo, as responsible noblemen should have immediately taken Malcolm under their protection and conducted him to the tribal assembly for confirmation as king, they do no such thing. Each hopes to capture the crown for himself and elbow Malcolm out of the running. The two princes recognize the danger they are in: while the noblemen and generals exchange hypocritical platitudes, they confer together and decide to escape in separate directions:

Don. [Aside to Mal.] What should be spoken
Here where our fate, hid in an auger-hole,
May rush, and seize us? Let's away
(II. iii. 121-3)

That Macduff is more occupied with his political advancement than with protecting his wife and children is brought out powerfully in Lady Macduff's expostulation with Rosse for justifying her husband's flight:

Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion, and his titles, in a place
 From whence himself does fly? He loves us not:
 He wants the natural touch. . .
 (IV. ii. 6-9)

Attempts have been made to explain these lines in Macduff's favor,¹⁶ but the dramatic impact of the scene is enough to discredit Macduff so thoroughly that no argument is convincing enough to exonerate him from the charge of deserting his family for the furtherance of his political aspirations. Later in the play Malcolm too is incredulous at Macduff's conduct:

Why in that rawness left you wife and child
 (Those precious motives, those strong knots of love),
 Without leave-taking?
 (IV. iii. 26-28)

Similarly, though Banquo knows Macbeth to be the murderer of Duncan ("and I fear/Thou play'st most foully for't"), his last words are, "May they not be my oracles as well, /And set me up in hope? But hush; no more" (III. i. 2-3, 9-10). If not an aider, he is nevertheless an abettor. For both Macduff and Banquo the personal pronoun "I" has priority over the welfare of the country. Their self-aggrandisement is a contrast to Hamlet who as scourge and minister cleanses Denmark of the evil embodied in Claudius and, in the process, perishes himself. The picture Shakespeare paints in *Macbeth* is not a pleasant one. Macbeth's ambition is of course a truism; but that of Duncan, Macduff, and Banquo is only slightly less overt. Whereas in *King Lear* there is a sharp distinction between the good characters (Cordelia, Kent, Edgar, and Albany) and the bad characters (Goneril, Regan, Edmund, and Cornwall), in *Macbeth* all the characters are selfish and self-seekers.

Macbeth is not as politically oriented a play as *Julius Caesar*; nevertheless Shakespeare does here hint at the political undercurrents that determine human conduct—the acumen of Duncan, the ambition of Macduff and Banquo, and the frustration of Macbeth, a highly successful general married to a woman determined to see her husband wear the golden round, on the point of being bypassed in the scramble for power. None of these individuals is an angel. Macbeth never mentions Duncan's duplicity except once when he hints at it, and that too in an aside when he is confronted by the swift promotion of Malcolm to the status of the Prince of Cumberland. In fact, Macbeth pleads with deep emotion for Duncan against his own criminal self ("This Duncan/Hath borne his faculties so meek" [I. vii. 16-18], and the enormity of his crime so fills his vision that he has no room for self-justification on the ground of Duncan's duplicity. Whereas it is true that the pangs of conscience that assail Macbeth play a major role in the retrieval of

his tragic stature after the murder of Duncan, this by itself is not sufficient to account for the retention of our sympathy by Macbeth in the latter half of the play when he embarks upon a career of crime, beginning with the murder of Banquo.

What I suggest, then, is that the ingratitude of Duncan set against Macbeth's service to him and the kingdom, followed by the elevation of Malcolm to the position of heir apparent are powerful contributory factors to the establishment of Macbeth as a tragic hero. He is a sinner, true, but like King Lear, a man more sinned against than sinning. That Macbeth at no stage spells out in detail Duncan's duplicity need not blind us to its presence, and such an awareness will help us to recognize in a fuller measure the dimensions of Macbeth's tragic stature, those of a man so full "o' th' milk of human kindness" that he remains very nearly oblivious to the injustice done him by Duncan.

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Notes

¹I give below a few sample comments on Duncan as being more or less typical of the general critical attitude toward him: "The innocent perish promiscuously; as Duncan and Banquo in *Macbeth*" (John Dennis, "An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespeare," 1712, *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1943, II, 7); "...the dramatic beauty of the character of Duncan, which excites the respect and pity even of his murderers" (William Hazlitt, "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays," 1817, *The Complete Works*, ed. P.P. Howe, London: J.M. Dent, 1930, IV, 190); "And here in contrast with Duncan's 'plenteous joys', Macbeth has nothing but the commonplaces of loyalty" (*Coleridge on Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, p. 211); "A King mild, just, and beloved" (A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 1904; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1952, p. 351); "Duncan was everything that Macbeth is not... He was 'meek' and 'clear', and his mind was incapable of suspicion" (Mark Van Doren, "Macbeth," *Shakespeare*, 1939; rpt. in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean, London: OUP, 1967, p. 358); "The generosity and gratitude of Duncan should appear as of the very essence of the man" (John Masefield, *A 'Macbeth' Production*, London: Heinemann, 1945, p. 38); "The virtuous charity of King Duncan..." (G.R. Elliott, *Dramatic Providence in 'Macbeth'*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, p. vii); "[Duncan] is there before us simply as an image, praised in angelic terms" (Allardyce Nicoll, *Shakespeare*, London: Methuen, 1952, p. 138); "It is necessary only that [Duncan] be known as a 'good king', the murder of whom will be a wicked act. He must be clearly the best type of benevolent monarch" (Wayne Booth, "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain," in *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, ed. Laurence Lerner, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p. 185); "Duncan has often been called a Christ figure... I believe there is some justification for this term as applied to the virtuous king of Scotland" (Clifford Davidson, *The Primrose Way: A Study of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'*, Conesville, Iowa: John Westburg & Associates, 1970, p. 13).

²Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth* (London: Arden Shakespeare, Methuen, 1969), p. xli. Quotations from the play are from this text.

³As is well known, the authenticity of this scene has for long been a subject of dispute, but for the purpose of this paper I go on Muir's verdict that it is "substantially authentic" (p. xxi).

⁴IV. i. 71-72 and V. i. 41.

⁵Here in fact Shakespeare is closely adhering to Holinshed, the main source for *Macbeth*, who describes Duncan as being "negligent . . . in punishing offenders" (Muir, p. 173). For a contemporary historian's view of Duncan which corroborates Holinshed and describes him as "weak" and "incompetent in his handling of military affairs," see Peter Beresford Ellis, *Macbeth: High King of Scotland 1040-57 AD* (London: Frederick Muller, 1980), chapter 5.

⁶See Archibald A.M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*, The Edinburgh History of Scotland, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1975), p. 107.

⁷This relationship is spelt out in Holinshed (Muir, p. 173); that Shakespeare assumed his audience knew these details is indicated by Duncan's reference to Macbeth as his cousin (I. ii. 24 and I. iv. 13).

⁸George Steevens, quoted in footnote to I.iv.39 of *Macbeth*, ed. Horace Howard Furness, New Variorum Edition (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1878), II. 48.

⁹See, eg, Muir, p. xli.

¹⁰For an excellent study of Denmark in the English consciousness, see Cay Dollerup, *Denmark, 'Hamlet', and Shakespeare: A Study of Englishmen's Knowledge of Denmark Towards the End of the Sixteenth Century with Special Reference to 'Hamlet'*, 2 vols. Salzburg Studies in English Literature (Salzburg: Institut für englische Sprache und Literatur, Universität Salzburg, 1975). See also Martin Holmes, *The Guns of Elsinore* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1964), pp. 46-53.

¹¹For a perceptive analysis of the significance of Denmark, Norway, Poland, Germany, England, and France in the unfolding of Hamlet's identity, see Ralph Berry's chapter "Hamlet: Nationhood and Identity" in his *Shakespearean Structures* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp. 24-46.

¹²Ellis (n. 5 above), pp. 8-9.

¹³G.B. Harrison, ed. *Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), p. 1184. See also Henry N. Paul, *The Royal Play of 'Macbeth'* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), pp. 317-31.

¹⁴Duncan (n. 6 above), p. 99.

¹⁵*Encyc. Brit.* 11th ed., "Scotland—History," p. 432.

¹⁶See Muir, pp. 120-1.

The Latter End of a Sea-Coal Fire: Sonnet 73 by Harold A. Dickey

Whatever might be said of hypostatic unions, the speaker in Shakespeare's sonnets realizes that he and the listener must live in time. Sonnet 73 is a particularly remarkable reenactment of a stretch of time in which the speaker and listener can commune by participating in the existence of the things depicted. The reader's share in the communion grows out of, or can grow out of, what the following discussion tries to establish: that the fire in the third quatrain is part of the same day in which the other familiar images occur, that the fire is part of the continuous flow of time from the beginning line to the final couplet. Making the fire a part of the current of the day depends in turn upon seeing the fire as a familiar kind, a hearth-fire. The speaker, of course, faces all the usual difficulties of age attempting to embrace youth, some of them no doubt familiar to old teachers attempting to win sympathy for the sonnet itself from young students. Within the world of the poem itself, if there were a space where timeless souls could "negotiate," and such a space could be created in a poem, the souls might flow together like Milton's ageless angels. In the world of time, however, there are always gray hairs and fallen chops that may evoke pity but not necessarily the longed-for leap of the sympathetic imagination. All this the world well knows, at least the part which has aged a bit. Elsewhere, and perhaps less continuously, Shakespeare establishes rapport by bringing the younger listener into the cycle of birth and death, as, for instance, in Sonnet 12. In Sonnet 73 the intense presence of speaker and listener makes the poem almost unique. The listener is a continuous observer of the various metamorphoses to which the speaker draws his attention. As the speaker calls upon the listener to observe the changes and to imagine the symbolic relationships, the exercise of the poetic imagination becomes mingled with the listener's compassion for the plight of the speaker. And that combination of symbolism and compassion can finally be seen by the reader as a distinctly human ability. But a great deal depends upon how one interprets the fire in the third quatrain.

It may be that the very abundance of commentary about the principal images in the three quatrains has had the effect of transfixing them like insect specimens so that scholars have ignored some important aspects of their sequence within a single day. I place the images at the latter end of a winter day (nothing entirely new in that) but take the additional step of placing the fire on a hearth, with a local habitation. The death of the fire is then the death of the day which has been made to happen by the three quatrains. The poem, "like all genuine poems. . .enacts what it describes."¹ Such a view, as we shall

see, helps to account for the powerful experience of the poem. The imminence of loss—and the immanence of loss—in the three quatrains is thus repeated by the form of the entire poem. Moreover, seeing the fire as the last one of the day makes it clear that the forms in nature taken by the speaker are not merely rhetorical figures completely in his control but metamorphoses imposed on him by time itself. The speaker by his language makes the day happen, but he also gradually relinquishes the day through the dramatic action of the poem. The great urgency created by the symbolic action has been felt by many readers, of course, but has not been fully accounted for. Most of the commentaries place the fire as a kind of *topos* in a timeless metaphysical space. None really develops for it an imaginary and familiar setting in time. As the last fire of the day, it should cause the alert reader, in his earlier familiar experience of the leaves, trees, choirs, and the fading twilight, to feel from the very beginning the "dial's shady stealth."² It is my notion that readers do feel it but do not always know why. The pull of time, once one begins reading Sonnet 73, is difficult to escape. Once one is caught in the current, it is difficult merely to turn at some extra-textual leisure from one image to the next. I think I can show some important reasons for the pull, but the argument will be taking the fire as a kind of center for the poem's reference to its own construction.³

The fire, at least as I fancy it, would be a kind familiar to an Elizabethan, what Mistress Quickly calls "the latter end of a sea-coal fire."⁴ But my inclination to interpret the fire as I do is not simply a matter of finding all the fireplaces I can in the plays and poems. It is partly an awareness that where a contemporary might go for an image from a literary source, Shakespeare will often go for the homely detail. In Gertrude's account, for instance, of Ophelia's death, the hoary undersides of the willow leaves, as they would appear reflected in the water, are well-known to Shakespeare scholars, because the detail seems to be from an actual scene which has registered with Gertrude involuntarily and comes out eidetically in the description. The plays are full of such details that point outward to a familiar world that the play creates the illusion of imitating. Or Venus, as another example, gives "poor Wat," the hounded hare in her rhetorical example for Adonis, five full, marvelously detailed stanzas that, as far as I can see, go well beyond the demands of narrative or conventional demands for references to unnatural natural history.⁵ The hare illustrated for the Romantics how Shakespeare would almost involuntarily become that which he contemplated. In the plays and poems the world of things is dense and unavoidable. Shakespeare's cornucopia tends to be English rather than classical. The choice of image is often from the familiar and commonplace; and Shakespeare's habits elsewhere need to be taken into account in Sonnet 73. The commonplace

plays its part even in the grandest politics. For instance, unlike Dryden's world in *All for Love*, Shakespeare's world of *Antony and Cleopatra* depends more obviously on fallible and sometimes very undignified persons. In the antimasque on Pompey's barge a third of the world is carried off stage in a distinctly earthen vessel, the drunken Lepidus. In short, Shakespeare's pervasive use of the humble and familiar encourages one to see a hearth-fire in Sonnet 73, one familiar to greasy Joan, Mistress Quickly, as well as more exalted citizens. Commoner and aristocrat alike must have stared into the embers of such a fire, anticipating its death, and often their own, reluctantly going off to a cold bed in an unheated room.⁶

As another extra-textual and familiar reason for placing the fire on a hearth we should also remember that, although daylight does end in the poem between the second and third quatrains, the day itself, the cycle rounded by a sleep, the fundamental cycle imitated by the poem, would be far from over at twilight on a winter's day at 51° 30' north. Blackmur's suggestion of November may be close enough. The temporal setting must be near enough the "year's midnight," at any rate, to put sunset at about 4:00 o'clock. The youth of the fire then, the ashes of which the fire lies on, would have occurred early in the day enacted by the poem and the poem picks up the day near dusk. The fire on such a day might be banked or allowed to burn out at 11:00 or 12:00. As one follows the movement of time through the poem, then, the time between the observation of the trees in the first quatrain and the observation of the twilight in the second quatrain would, for its first part in the action, hardly be foreshortened at all. But the time between twilight in the second quatrain and the last embers in the third quatrain would be foreshortened severely—foreshortened but not annihilated. If it is annihilated, the fire becomes part of a sestet commenting on the treatment of time in the octave. But the use of a figure that parallels the ones in the first two quatrains makes one hesitate to interrupt the flow of time. And, if we do keep the fire in the current of time in the poem, our awareness of its place in the enactment of the day transforms the poem. And it must follow (as the night the day) that the fire, because it does transform our conception of the rest of the poem, has a tendency to consume the poem as the fire consumes the speaker. The speaker is not only the things individually that he says he is in the poem but also the poem as a whole. Since the fire is all that is left of the day once we come to the third quatrain, it is all that is left of the poem and the speaker. At any rate, how we read the fire determines how we read the poem and vice versa.

Since Ransom's insistence that the boughs and the choirs in the first quatrain clash, many scholars have sought to show that the images in all three quatrains are consistent with themselves and with each other.⁷ The argument

about the diminishing length of the year, the day, and the fire is a familiar one by now and one that I can still accept but only as a partial explanation for the experience of the poem. A year is indeed longer than a day, and a day is longer than the last moments of a fire. But the last few seconds of a long period are the same as for a short period. And the argument of diminishing periods, like other interpretations, leaves the three principal images in an indefinite temporal relationship. The images in all the interpretations I have read are coordinate and rhetorical rather than sequential and dramatic. One of the advantages of emphasizing the temporal sequence is that one can see not only that the speaker is using figures that on one level are completely in his rhetorical power but see as well that he is creating the illusion of being swept along himself and of being transformed by time against his will. And one can also see that the speaker is becoming the changing objects which he contemplates and thereby invites the listener into the current of change. Within the symbolic action of the poem the sequence of images is not merely logical and rhetorical but temporal. On the one hand, the speaker exercises his will in ordering the three images logically in order to increase the clarity and urgency of what is happening to him. On the other hand, he creates the illusion of his being pushed against his will through to the end of the day. Once we see that to lose the fire is to lose the day, we see that the day is continuous and thus legitimately equated with the sole remaining part, the fire. And, of course, the law by which the part *is* the whole pervades the poem: one can experience a day in a merely abstract way by thinking of it as a pattern, but it can be taken in existentially only by confronting a given moment, in a "certain slant of light" or a "thick-moted sunbeam." The fire, in representing the day synecdochically, obeys a law intrinsic to the poem.

Another possible reason that both the rhetorical and temporal or mimetic modes have not been taken together is the intense isolation of the voice from the holocaust, the tenor (a human life) dominating the metaphor, as Booth puts it.⁸ The isolation may be mistaken for timelessness, which would then be applied back to the other principal images and freeze movement of time throughout the poem. But the consuming movement goes on in the third quatrain even as the speaker speaks, and time continues.

I have suggested that the fire enjoyed its youth at the beginning of the day enacted by the poem. But the crucial event is the ending of the fire. The movement continues in the burning and the death bed in the quatrain anticipates the bed the listener must reluctantly go to after leaving the fire. A voice from a timeless hell would be more like one from a furnace or an alembic, or some such elected figure. But I do not see that sort of Donnian choice here. The voice comes from a constantly changing but familiar object, somewhat as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where the familiar voice goes on as

time changes the owner into a tree or some such familiar object. Part of the horror is in the familiarity. Seeing the hearth-fire and the private holocaust in one and the same image is no contradiction or accident. The speaker can provide warmth and nourishment only because he and the listener live in time. We must love each other *and* die. We can love each other in a fully human way precisely because we are not Struldbrugs. Suffering in a timeless space or in an indefinite one, perhaps of the sort feared by Claudio in *Measure for Measure*, is indeed also frightening. But the intense relationship of the speaker to the constantly changing objects belongs peculiarly to Sonnet 73. And, applying the lesson of the fire to the earlier images, one moves along with them as they change.

Other features besides the fire itself might lead to an overemphasis on the coordination of the three images at the expense of their temporality. The appositives at the ends of the first and second quatrains may seem to close off the quatrain by a kind of epigrammatic summary.⁹ "Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang" and "Death's second self, that seals up all in rest" might too easily suggest independent rhetorical units, separate tropes confronting each other across a timeless space, and referring to the three principal images without allowing the images to act out the sense of the message. But one can feel the appositives as rather more valedictory, each part of the day in the two quatrains being relinquished even as it is enjoyed (and suffered). The choirs are still there as one leaves the quatrain, and the twilight is still there when one leaves the second quatrain. They are both about to fade as one goes on reading the poem. The "by and by" in the second quatrain, a counterpart to "ere long" at the very end (the "ere long" is the ultimate anticipation of the sonnet), draws attention to the direct experience of the imminence of loss, not the having lost. Loving and losing is what goes on as a continuous part of life and is different from having loved and lost. The latter might be material for another sonnet, perhaps to be called up in "sessions of sweet silent thought." The choirs in line 4, at any rate, might be conceded to be both closure and transition. "Death's second self, that seals up all in rest," on the other hand, might be felt to be a stronger closure and thus to discourage my making the fire a late-night hearth-fire. But, along with other readers, I take "death's second self" to be an anticipation of the sleep after the fire and thus as a continuation. Sensibly enough, Fred M. Fetrow picks up the implications of sleep and death for the aging speaker.¹⁰ But, since the listener is going through the day, observing the speaker in various moments of the day and participating in the existence of the objects along with the speaker, the sleep of the listener after the fire is out is also strongly implied. And that sleep symbolizes the death of the listener as well as the death of the speaker: "To love that well which *thou* must leave ere long."

Booth points out that sleep rather than night is the more traditional tenor for the vehicle death.¹¹ Thus, line 8, in presaging the sleep after the fire has been abandoned, continues the movement of the day depicted by the poem.

It seems only fair, if somewhat tedious in the anticipation of it, to go back now and test the hypothesis in a close reading of the poem. As the first line specifies, the poem begins late in the year, but also late in the day, for various reasons. The expression "time of year" itself may go some way toward suggesting time of day simply by its pattern. Blackmur, in pointing out how the second and third quatrains are lent particularly and "force of relations" by the "particularity [barring perhaps the word 'choirs'] and syntactical unity of the first quatrain," says: "If the reader cannot see this, and see where he *is*, indefeasibly, let him read the line over till he does, noting especially the order of 'yellow leaves, or none, or few.' Perhaps it will help if he remembers an avenue of beech trees with nearly all the leaves dropped, and the rest dropping [my own reading will permit the trees to be various species], on a *late November afternoon toward dusk. . .*"¹¹ (my emphasis). I would probably try to make up my mind as between *late afternoon* and *dusk*, but Blackmur helps set the scene. Many readers, like Blackmur, have been intrigued as to how the poem can acquire such a density of texture without mentioning very many objects. It seems to me that alertness to the passing of the day will depend upon taking seriously Blackmur's advice that we read the first quatrain until we can see the trees in a proper setting. If the trees are pictured in an actual world, time will start to pass and the light will change. One will then be more likely to give the fire a local habitation when one arrives at the third quatrain. For the reader who is properly alert in the first two quatrains, as I fancy, the fire I envisage will come as no surprise.

The perception required by line 2, "When yellow leaves, or none or few do hang," is to be carried out in some detail but with some effort because of the late light. "When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang" imitates in its scattering of the normal syntax and logic the requisite eye-movements. The light fades even as one watches, and the harmony between the purely physical actions and the more abstract meanings is closer than has been appreciated. The movement, then, of attention from the leaves to the boughs in line 3 would be perfectly expected as the leaves fade and the boughs stand out against a sky that would still be lighter than the immediate locality. In moving from the leaves to the boughs the reader relinquishes one object in order to seek the next, in a kind of emblem of the listener's relinquishment of the speaker even while loving him. I am not suggesting that the listener would think all this yet, especially if he is the young man in the other sonnets, where he is not a noted thinker, but that the speaker hopes he will begin to *feel* the pattern. The relinquishment in the poem always takes place just before the

object fades. The reader is hurried along as time threatens to destroy the valued object. When I say "valued," I include the kind of fire that is pleasant and one that is left with reluctance.

It may be objected, of course, that my emphasis upon relinquishment here makes a special case of a process that happens when we read anything. The act of reading, by its very sequentiality requires us to abandon one word before we can read the next. In a sense, language always imitates the temporality of human existence. But, if there is no contrasting kind of language that does not imitate temporality, then language always does and never does. It seems to me that this particular poem draws our attention to the relinquishment that is always present in the act of reading by controlling the flow of dramatic time, and represents the loss inherent in our loving any mortal person.

At any rate, the leaves are relinquished and the boughs become more prominent against the sky. Then, as the light continues to fade, and even the smaller branches disappear, the boughs become bare ruined choirs while one watches, on almost a pre-intellectual, retinal level. In *Comedy of Errors* (II. i. 96) being ruined is equated with being *defeatured*. If one thinks of trees as being ruined of more and more features, or details, as the light changes, one could say that the trees are ruined by time as one watches. And the implication is that the ruin to the speaker is constant and unremitting.

Related to my interpretation of the fire and the effect of that interpretation on the whole poem is a question of how to interpret "late" in "where late the sweet birds sang." The word is ordinarily taken to mean "in the springtime of my life but no longer." If we add "late in the day but no longer," the day in question would be the one depicted by the poem if we take the fire in the sense that I have been taking it. If we were to add, contrary to what critics usually do, a few winter birds to the trees and choirs, as well as spring birds, the winter birds would have begun their singing at the time the fire was laid. Of course, at the time of the poem, they no longer sing any more than the spring birds do. The pattern of the day, then, enacted by the poem would repeat the pattern of the year represented by the first quatrain, and both the day and the year would represent the speaker's life. The life of the speaker, then, is represented by the year of the first quatrain with its birds of spring, by the day of the second quatrain with its twilight, by the fire of the third quatrain, all as he merely states, *and* by the day enacted by the poem with its morning birds. Needless to say, then, the poem represents the speaker's life and gives new dimension to the "leave" of the last line, because leaving off reading the poem represents leaving the speaker. And turning away from the last fire of the day, with a kind of existential shudder, corresponds to leaving the speaker.

It is usually assumed that turning away from the first quatrain to read the second is a matter of voluntarily turning away from one figure to examine another one. But the fading light in fact makes the turn westward almost involuntary. The local light fails; the choirs begin to fade. The listener has seen his friend in the depicted objects but begins to lose him. The turn is as reflexive as the change of the trees to choirs has been. One looks for the friend where the light is stronger yet, but ironically more associated with death. And the urgency is greater, not only because *a* day is shorter than *a* year, but because *the* twilight is closer to the end of *this* day of the poem. In moving from image to image, the listener is never to catch the speaker in any fixed state. He only catches glimpses as the speaker is constantly changed by time. The twilight will continue to fade, and vanish "by and by," but not while we are watching. The light is alive only because it is constantly being lost, and it is constantly being lost because it is alive.

It now remains to discuss the mortal right-lined circle of the poem and the strategy of the speaker. Murray Krieger suggests that a poem can give the illusion of recreating a sacred bit of time that would otherwise be a part of the merciless straight line of human existence. The straight line is thus made circular and the unique and unrepeatable is made to happen again. In the present instance, the cycle of the day, as the most fundamental figure of life, between the two great sleeps, is often a figure of resurrection. Lycidas's star will rise tomorrow. One might suppose, then, creating a poem to represent a day would defeat the speaker's purposes and run counter to the *memento mori* sentiment. Emphasizing the familiar comfort of the fire as the center of daily life might make the listener complacent rather than sympathetic. But I think the familiarity of the fire, especially since it is last and not the center, has the opposite effect. Instead of turning a straight line to a cycle, the speaker takes the circle and turns it into a straight line. The hearth-fire is daily resurrected, along with the household gods that live in it, but not *today's* fire, the one the speaker equates himself with. The self-consuming fire, like the self-consuming poem, is in some respects repeatable. But the experience that one recreates from Sonnet 73 is specifically of unrepeatability. The speaker no longer has the luxury of the repeatable circle, especially with the abandonment of the last fire of the day. I have been assuming that the day enacted by the poem and the poem enacted by the fire have a determinate existence, and that the day can be relived in many similar ways upon rereadings of the poem, but always as a reminder of unrepeatability. Like other fictional days with their "certain slants of light" or their "thick-moted sunbeams," the day of Sonnet 73 has its dying fire, especially because of its position last in the day. If one could lift the moment in front of the dying fire out of the current of the day, or, indeed, pluck a rock, a stone, or tree out of the

diurnal course, and contemplate it philosophically, one might for a timeless moment escape the dread of the icy couch. But escape is precisely what the fire in the third quatrain will not allow. Nor will it allow one to pluck the images in the other quatrains from the current and contemplate them in the comfort of Euclidean space. One can reread the poem, but, when one must leave the fire, the equation of the cycle—the season, the day, the fire, and the entire day of the poem—with the “right-lined circle” forces upon one the further equation between the symbolic action of sleeping and dying. Where some of the equations are true, the final one can come true, too. The listener is thus given a taste of mortality and the imminence of loss, however young he might be, not an entirely bad taste perhaps, because of the remarkable play of his friend’s imagination in the face of death. The final appeal is not one for pity for gray hairs and fallen chops. They are not invoked. Besides, that sort of appeal probably makes the young simply vow never to grow old. In the shared symbolic enactment the speaker incarnates himself in the objects as they exist in time, somewhat in contrast to the companion poem, Sonnet 74, where he turns to the part of him that will survive the world of time. As the listener partakes of the existence of the objects, the “dial’s shady stealth” creates a distinctly human bond. To live in time is to grow old, but to live in time is to be able to love. The play of imagination and the play of compassion become a single action of the mind and heart.

A final note on my assumptions: in backing away from the sonnet, or in returning to it after a time, when one is not pulled into the action of the poem, one might ask whether I have not, like too many modern critics, attributed perceptions to the listener in the poem that he would not be likely to have. If the movement of the dial has been shady enough so that critics have missed it, how can I assume that Shakespeare’s young listener would catch it? The answer is that many critics have indeed sensed it without carrying out the argument. I have simply added a footnote. Other critics have perhaps distracted themselves with other sorts of subtlety, as I have tried to show. Moreover, the argument from the familiarity of the fire is the opposite of an appeal to subtlety. The young listener in the poem need not be a super-reader in order to carry out the suggestion of the final couplet on the level I have explicated: “This thou *perceivest*, which makes thy love more strong/To love that well which thou must leave ere long,” especially when leaving the fire presents existentially the leaving of the day created by the poem. That shudder is something we all understand.

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Notes

¹Sigurd Burckhardt, *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 34.

²Sonnet 77.1-2.

³My paper owes much to Murray Krieger's *Theory of Criticism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976) and various of his other books mentioned there, and to Rosalie Colie's *Paradoxia Epidemica* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 355-395.

⁴*The Merry Wives of Windsor* I. iv. 8-9. Subsequent references to the Riverside Edition. My argument that Shakespeare may be thinking of a hearth-fire does not depend irretrievably upon whether Elizabethans *always* in fact put their fires out every night, or whether they banked them, as in the example below from *Much Ado About Nothing*. Mistress Quickly's "latter end of a sea-coal fire" could indeed refer to the banking of a fire. But the last fire of any day can in fact have great symbolic impact, whether it is going to be resurrected the next morning or not. That is, in touting the virtues of some kinds of literal-mindedness, I have not intended that my reader should willfully misunderstand me and out-Bottom Bottom.

⁵*Venus and Adonis*, 679-708.

⁶Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible*, vol. 1, tr. from the French, Sian Reynolds (Cambridge, etc.: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 299: "It was here [fireplaces up to about 1720] that people could sit when the fire had died down to its embers, and chat 'under the mantel.'" In the plays one finds fires pleasant and unpleasant. Mistress Quickly to John Rugby: "Go, and we'll have a posset for't soon at night, in faith, at the latter end of a sea-coal fire." [I. iv. 8-9] Pleasant late-night fires seem to be a part of the tableau one has of Mistress Quickly. An example from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is unpleasant and suggests the wee hours rather than late night: "Now the wasted brands do glow,/Whilst the screech-owl, screeching loud,/Puts the wretch that lies in woe/In remembrance of a shroud." [V. i. 375-8] Another example, this time of a covered fire, representing the view from the interior of the holocaust, is from *Much Ado About Nothing*, [III. i. 77-80]: "Therefore let Benedick, like cover'd fire,/Consume away in sighs, waste inwardly." This is probably a fire on a hearth rather than a forge, where only the coal in the center blown by the bellows is encouraged to burn. In any case, it is not an abstract fire.

⁷*The World's Body* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1964), pp. 297-8: "It is one thing to have the boughs shaking against the cold, and in that capacity they carry very well the fact of the old rejected lover; it is another thing to represent them as ruined choirs where the birds no longer sing. The latter is a just representation of the lover too, and indeed a subtler and richer one, but the two images cannot, in logical rigor, co-exist." I quote Ransom at length as the focus of many later commentaries. My present view is that images can co-exist in time, if not in logic. Stephen Booth, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 116-130, should be read in detail, along with Arthur Mizener's "The Structure of Figurative Language in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Southern Review*, 5 (Spring, 1940), 730-47, which is quoted at length by Booth. Two articles that come close to seeing the fire as I do, but without developing the notion, are R.L. Widman, "Looking into Shakespeare's Sonnet 73," *Library Chronicle*, 39 (1973), 81-88, and Fred M. Fetrow, "Strata and Structure," *Concerning Poetry* (Western Washington State College), 9 (1976), 23-25. Widman sees the fire as occurring late on some night, and Fetrow says, "The first four lines contain the imagery of outdoors: trees, architecture and the chilly atmosphere. The available space begins to lessen as our view of sunset [not really, strictly speaking, present in the poem] and twilight is obscured by the black of night [one can disagree about whether black night "doth" take away the twilight while one watches in the poem]. In dramatic effect, darkness, the shadow of death, forces an old man inside to sit beside the fire. [In me thou seest the glowing' suggests more directly that the listener is sitting beside the fire.] Once inside, it is not far to his final space allotted in life, the deathbed. Again a subtle spatial compression works in conjunction with a poetic structure based on time limitation." My view is that the placing of the fire as part of the *same* day provides the "time limitation." My considerable debt to Fetrow, at any rate, is shown by the quoted passage.

As far as I know, no one has done a study of the fire as a *topos* of the sort that one finds in Emblem 15 of George Wither's *A Collection of Emblems, Ancient and Moderne* (1633), where the fire is an altar fire, taken over by Wither from his source. The fire on the altar says, "I pine, that others may not perish,/ And waste my Selfe, their Life to cherish." Wither then moralizes: "Observe I pray you, how the greedy Flame/The Feuell, on an Altar doth consume./How it destroyeth that which feedes the same,/ And how the Nourisher away doth fume." Wither then goes on, rather appropriately for our poem, to apply the emblem to parents who are consumed for their children, but he also makes various other applications. My own argument emphasizes non-literary fires, but I am not unmindful of what one could call, from Rosalie Colie's title, *The Resources of Kind*. And in any case, however commonplace the fire might be as *topos*, Shakespeare performs local magic on it.

⁸*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, edited with analytic commentary by Stephen Booth (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 260.

⁹Rosalie Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press), Chapter 2, "Mel and Sal: Some Problems of Sonnet-Theory," pp. 68-134. Colie does not examine Sonnet 73 for elements of epigram, but I should say that a reader who takes Sonnet 73 more in the epigrammatic vein than I may very well have some serious disagreements with my emphasis. But he or she would have to make epigrams in general more static than they usually are.

¹⁰Fetrow, *ibid.*

¹¹Booth, p. 128. "In the next lines the reader's mind is again in motion. *Night*, in the context of *twilight*, is expected, but here *night* is called *Death's second self*. Since *Black night* suggests a ghostly figure capable of abducting the twilight, the equation with death is easy to accept. However, *Death's second self* suggests the traditional epithet for sleep, 'The younger brother of Death.' The suggestion of sleep inherent in the epithet is then confirmed by the rest of the line: *that seals up all in rest*. Night and sleep are closely related concepts, and there is nothing startling about the mention of one leading to the mention of the other. Here, however, the reader's mind must act upon the lines, adjusting its understanding as the idea of night fuses into, and at last is almost lost in, the idea of sleep, which, in *lie* and *deathbed*, is still dimly present in the next quatrain."

¹²R.P. Blackmur, "A Poetics for Infatuation," in *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. by Edward Hubler (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1962), pp. 149-50.

¹³Krieger, p. 212.

The Case of the "Base Judean" Revisited by R.F. Fleissner

Assuredly the major textual crux in the intense tragedy about a black commander who weds a white Italian lady is the Moor's poignant reference to himself in his last speech. The specific problem is whether he alludes to his being a Judas and *en passant* whether such an image was meant to conjure up associations with not only the betrayer of Christ, but *the Jew*, in stereotypical Christian terms, as a miscreant. For us to minimize or ignore the import of the latter implications would surely be unaccountable, however slight they may appear to insensitive audiences. In this essay, I contend that Shakespeare meant for his spectators to sympathize with Othello as a lowly, dark Indian, not to have them indulge in anti-Semitism, whether or not advertently, by thinking of him as a "base Judean." (His actual origin is Moorish.)

Let us look at the familiar passage once more. The Folio hero compares himself to

. . .one, whose hand
(Like the base Iudean) threw a Pearle away
Richer then all his Tribe. . . .

He then relates himself to Semitic people in yet another sense by speaking of one "whose subdu'd Eyes,/Albeit vn-vsed to the melting moode,/Drops teares as fast as the Arabian Trees/Their Medicinable gumme."¹ We notice immediately that the compositor erred in syntax by indicating improper agreement of the verb. But the major problem, of course, is with *Iudean*. In recent times, certain editors and critics have preferred the reading "the base Judean" to the formerly more accepted Quarto reading of "base Indian."² If the Moor calls himself a wicked man of Judea, then he would recall, primarily, Judas, who threw away a pearl "of great price" (Matt. 13: 45-46), namely Jesus, ironically in order to obtain riches for himself (if material ones only). Should the Moor refer to himself as an Indian, he could be alluding either to an American or Asiatic type, and *base* would most probably not have the primary meaning of *evil*, but rather *lowly*. So it stands to reason that if any unconscious or surreptitious prejudice is lurking in what he says, it would most likely relate to what is nefarious rather than merely lowly, to the later "Judean" reading instead of the seemingly more primitive "Indian" one.

In my own previous contributions to a solution of the crux, I have resolutely championed the "Indian" cause.³ Although valid dissension is always welcome, if dialogue ensues, the persistence with which various critics have been turning to the "Judean" reading and ignoring the hidden bias

which may be involved is disheartening. It is one thing to avoid such consideration as special pleading; it is indeed another to take a common sense approach, accepting facts and norms at face value. At stake are not merely the persona's own racial or religious preferences, but a proper attitude regarding the literary roots of anti-Semitism. It may be misinformed to assert that a given bias is more than unconscious or stereotyped, but whatever its basis, it ought to be clearly divulged.

Hence I submit this paper as, in part, a review-article which focuses upon the most recent and strongest endorsement of the "base Judean" reading, that by Joan Ozark Holmer.⁴ I hasten to say that my concern is not with her learned and beautifully relevant application of folklore dealing with the myrrh tree to this context, but with her lengthy insistence that the "Judean" reading is thematically far superior to "Indian." Although her research is, in the main, diligent and elegantly composed, and it is only with great trepidation that I beg to differ with it, her argument is perilous and may easily mislead the unwary. But my overall purpose is to use her article principally as a point of departure not merely for disposing of the "Judean" reading, but for concentrating on new evidence favoring "Indian."

One of Holmer's central supporting ideas, for example, is that "the 'Jewishness' of Othello's and Judas' gesture would have been strikingly clear to an Elizabethan audience who, as G.K. Hunter has demonstrated, understood 'Jewishness' as a moral condition of spiritual blindness to true value, applicable to Christians as well as infidels—the 'Jewish choice' being to throw away Christ. . . ." The use of inverted commas is noticeable as indicating a special effect at times but not at others presumably (for instance, the last usage). On the same page, she cites as analogous evidence "George Herbert's poem 'Self-condemnation' where the 'Judas-Jew' is one that 'doth love, and love amisse,' or as Othello puts it, 'one that lov'd not wisely, but too well' "—passages which are not so parallel, after all, for loving "amisse" and loving "too well" are rather removed from each other. Obviously many more ways of loving in a wrong-headed manner exist than through loving too much. Part of her weighty documentation includes reference to a three-volume doctoral dissertation of some prominence which I also have consulted; it takes up the crux at length, especially in a valuable appendix, and cites historical evidence revealing that Englishmen indeed identified Judas with *the* ("typical") Jew (for example, in Berchorius' encyclopedia).⁶ Although she does not mention the matter, it points out how the countries *India* and *Iudea* were confused by seventeenth-century printers. A student of the crux ignores this dissertation only at his peril.

Holmer's problem is, however, that she fails to confront head on the latent Renaissance bias her strong statements could suggest, qualifying them

only with such a phrase as "applicable to Christians as well as infidels." Yet this crux is by no means merely another specialized textual effect in Shakespeare, as she knows, for it points to one of the time-honored controversies engaging the learned through the centuries. It has been claimed by so-called "Christianizers"; they, in turn, have been criticized by others when they have failed to give due weight to the "pagan" reading. A solution to the puzzle is not merely a subjective matter, for over the course of centuries certain facts have established themselves slowly but surely, ones which may not be cavalierly dismissed.

To begin, the "Indian" reading is an earlier, Quarto one, whereas "Iudean" derives from the 1623 Folio. Although this is common enough knowledge, it is less known that the metrical context demands an accent on the first syllable (viz., "Júdean"). This accentuation was marked in an early edition I saw in the Samuel Tannenbaum Shakespeare collection at the University of North Carolina; it has been recognized by a few modern Shakespeare specialists recently.⁷ The word was normally pronounced as it is today with the accent on the second syllable.⁸ If Shakespeare used the word, he would have had to vary the accentuation using poetic license; however, since most Shakespearians believe that his speech patterns follow those of ordinary life, right from the start we become dubious of the reading "base Júdean" as forced and thus unconvincing. A related problem is whether the word *Judean* existed in Shakespeare's vocabulary, for although some evidence has recently been forthcoming that the word existed twice before the *OED* has allowed and even at least once before the Folio, no solid proof is extant that the noun was in usage when the play was composed. Of course Shakespeare could have made up this word from its Latin root, but such a speculation is irresponsible when no outside evidence is available to support it. His other Latinisms or neologisms may help, but they in no way provide even circumstantial proof that this particular word was originated in an authorial revision of Othello's last speech. (True, the use of "Medicinable" there is also unmetrical.)

In order to cope best with Holmer's presentation, let us now reconsider the nine points she marshalls in support of her position (eight numbered in the text, another in her documentation). We can initially dispense with the matter of the possible Judean in question being Herod, who likewise got rid of Marianne, because Herod was considered an Idumean, not a Judean at all. Herod's living in Judea is hardly germane.

Her first point is that Judas was the "base Judean" because he was the only Judean among Christ's followers. Why this fact should be given any prominence when Jesus Himself was a Judean is not clear. Her second is that the Bible which Shakespeare used indicated that "Judas was seen as representative of the Judeans, the only 'tribe of the world' to fall from Christ,

although analogically any sinful man could be a Judas and Judean crucifying Christ anew through sin (see Heb. 6:6)." This indictment is almost like saying that not only is a sinner a Judean, but a Judean is a sinner. Such a label is tantamount to labeling Jews Christ-killers, for it accuses even a Christian who trespasses, insofar as he crucifies Christ again, of being a Jewish miscreant. No doubt some Christian bigots, even clergy, accepted this attitude, but did Shakespeare? The simple historical fact he would have accepted is that the Romans on the scene were the ones who crucified Christ. Should it be charged that Jesus was delivered by Jews into the hands of Romans, who had little choice but to execute Him, a reasonable response is that relatively few Jews were involved and would hardly have symbolized the entire Jewish race or nation. Modern apologetics reassure us that, if we have to generalize, it is best to believe that neither "the Jews" nor "the Romans" crucified the Savior: rather, fallen humanity was the culprit. Such, I submit, has always been the heart-felt Christian understanding. Judas, moreover, should not get much blame himself if he was merely following divine destiny; he was, in effect, ordained to betray the Savior who was Himself foreordained to be slain. Hence the Coptics have elevated Judas to a saint-like figure. In any case, if many Englishmen did hold ingrained anti-Semitic sentiments (or, strictly, anti-Jewish ones if it be argued that the bias was more religious than ethnic) since Jews had been ousted from England centuries before, would a universal genius like Shakespeare have lowered himself to such a belief? Even his Shylock is humanized.

Holmer's third point is that "Shakespeare *never* uses 'tribe' elsewhere to indicate Indians," but he does frequently associate it with Jews.⁹ Yet the point is that Shakespeare has so few references to Indians that his never linking them elsewhere with tribes hardly proves a thing. By the same dubious logic, we might say that he never refers to Magyars drinking tea. Further, he does allude to Arabians living tribally,¹⁰ and since Arabia and India both border on the Indian Ocean (famous for its pearl-diving, as alluded to in the crux), it is altogether natural for him to cite a tribe in India as akin to one in Arabia. Holmer's reference to what she designates "the Mediterranean context" (p. 147) of Othello's speech (his allusions to Aleppo, in northern Syria, and to Turkey as well as Arabia) supports this connection, but it is more profitable to extend the geographical context to the East and thus embrace India or at least the Indian Ocean as well.

True, to western ways of thinking, Indian tribes are now more frequently seen in connection with American redskins because those in India have been relegated to castes, yet anthropologists reveal how numerous tribes in India were. No evidence exists, moreover, to support the verdict that Shakespeare would have known that New World Indians lived in tribes. The reference in

the crucial speech then is to an Old World Indian, a poor fisherman then unaware of the economic value of his pearls—unlike other natives of India becoming fast aware of the emergence of the East India Company. On this point, Cumberland Clark's essay "Indians" is still useful, noting that "the indiscriminate use of the word 'Indian' for the Indian proper as well as for the American native, and the frequent reference to the West Indian and Spanish America as 'India,' often makes it impossible to decide to which India or Indian an Elizabethan writer alludes."¹¹ It is all too easy, therefore, to say that "Judean" fits the passage better than "Indian" because the context is Eastern and the Indian cited is American; although it was indeed commonplace that American Indians were carefree with their valuables, the same was true in former times with natives of India. If Shakespeare's most likely source was about an American Indian, current ambiguity, as Clark shows, could have enabled him to shift the context to suit his purposes.¹² In other words, he may easily have transformed an American Indian from his source into an Indian Indian.

In connection with Holmer's third point is her following assertion (repeating *never* again): "It is very important to observe that in Shakespeare's time, as in our own, 'base' *never* means 'ignorant,' and this philological fact devastates the relevance of the 'Indian' reading for Othello's self-description" (p. 152). The only devastation that occurs, however, is the straw man she knocks down. The meaning of "base" was sometimes *lowly* or possibly, in addition, as I have pointed out elsewhere, *dark*; Shakespeare used the expression "base clouds," for example, which means dark ones, or plausibly dark ones which are also set low.¹³ The word's most common meaning was *wicked*, not *ignorant*, a signification on which she dwells too much. Likewise, she contends that "Shakespeare *never* uses the word 'base-minded'," (p. 154), as found in the most likely source, Nashe's *Piers Penniless*, a reference to persons "base-minded and like the Indians, that have store of gold and precious stones at command, yet are ignorant of their value. . . ." ¹⁴ To my mind, her revelation is neither here nor there, for he did employ similar expressions like "base mind" and "base. . . mind" in various places.¹⁵ What strikes me as most meaningful about the Nashe passage is that there the very *dis*association of "base" and "ignorant" shows that the words had different significations. All in all, she gives this possible source short shrift.

Her fourth point is that "the shared identity of the first syllable of *Judas* and *Judean* invites the suggestion of *Judas*." This argument, however, ignores the vital point that the word *Judean* as used in the play would have its accent more on the *Ju* sound owing to the emphasis upon the first syllable. Such a connotation has anti-Semitic reverberations for us ("base Jew"); moreover, it is out-of-place at this juncture in the play. The indication is that the Moor is

winding down after his tragic execution of his wife, indulging in a "*Bovarysme*," as Eliot deigned to call it, thereby "cheering himself up." To have Othello end on a "base Ju-" or "Judas" note, proclaiming that he is a Christ-betrayer and Christ-killer, would present a misplaced climax. (For what would have been worse than a Judas?) His final self-destruction was meant as a form of penance, not as the ultimate transgression against the Holy Spirit.

Her fifth point is that "Judas, like Othello, betrayed innocent blood." True, but the Moor imagined at least that he was acting justly in executing his wife, and was not reacting out of greed or pride. Thus it is argued that his tragic fault was not so much jealousy (that being Iago's flaw) but misguided conviction. He was not acting like Judas for mercenary reasons. Her sixth point, that "Judas' token of betrayal was a kiss not unlike Othello's 'I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee';" is undercut by Romeo's death upon a kiss (both being, in a sense, star-crossed lovers). Surely no one would go so far as to relate this lover to Judas; even Paul N. Siegel, whose leading article "The Damnation of Othello" in *PMLA* Holmer incorrectly documents,¹⁶ referred to the religion of love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Her seventh point, that "'pearl' conveys familiar Biblical connotations that support the 'Judean' reading," overlooks the pertinent likelihood that Shakespeare was not thinking of "the perle of great price" (Matt. 13: 45-46) specifically, but had in mind Proverbs, where reference is made to the woman whose price is far above—not rubies in the Geneva Bible, which Shakespeare used, but indeed pearls (31.10). Old Testament allusions thus do not uphold a "Judean" reading necessarily, particularly if the one in question has New Testament associations. Throughout the last act, Othello's allusions point not only to the New Covenant but the fall of man in the Old.

Holmer's eighth point is that "the crucial modifiers, 'the' and 'base,' raise more problems for 'Indian' than for 'Judean,'" Having already considered "base," let us tackle the definite article. For years scholars have been searching for a particular lost story about a lowly Indian who gave away his precious pearls, true, yet Shakespeare apparently wanted the word *the* understood in a generic sense here. What he evidently meant was that Indians of times past, *in general*, gave up their pearls for a pittance. But when this valid generic meaning is transferred to *Judean*, the overall effect is disenchanting, reverberating with hidden bias, the serpent of anti-Semitism. Is it not gibberish to claim that, because of such an uncomfortable transferral, the generic meaning ought to be dispensed with? What needs to be finally disposed of is the misleading, false *Judean* reading.

After her eight points, Holmer offers what she calls a "curious" extra one in her notes, namely that both Othello and Judas were, in a manner of speaking, thieves, and adds another odd point in saying that "the very gesture

of 'throwing away' [the pearl] with one's own hand (V. ii. 347-48) may perhaps relate to Judas' gesture of throwing away the silver for which he had exchanged Christ" (Matt. 27:5)—a juxtaposition of two entirely different episodes in the Scriptures. (Such a conflation relates more to T.S. Eliot in "Journey of the Magi" than it does to Shakespeare, even though it is well known that *Othello* was influential.)

Allowing for "of course, differences between Othello and Judas" (p. 156), she ignores the stronger parallel between Iago and the arch-betrayer, instructing us that the Moor's "recognition of his 'blackness,' the devil's color, prompts his tearful remorse," whereby the inverted commas would indicate that he is not thinking of his blackness in a racial sense. In spite of Othello's ambiguous reference to the blackness of his face at one point, however, the symbolic association of blackness with evil is made by Iago and later Emilia, not by the black man himself. We have no certainty that the Moor, in spite of his references to hell at the end, goes to that destination. To say that most Elizabethans would have felt that the protagonist's literal blackness reinforces his figurative "blackness" is to give little credit to their intelligence or sense of irony.

On another level, Holmer inclines toward too literal a reading of the tragedy in terms of her reading of the crux. She finds that, because of his high-born status, the Moor would scarcely dub himself a lowly Indian, but the hero does not make any such absolute literal identification: he states only that his performance was "like" that of a poor Indian, one who did not know any better. Elsewhere she sees an ironic meaning when the intent appears straightforward: she urges that "'base' also ironically echoes Desdemona's earlier praise of Othello as possessing 'no such baseness' (III. iv. 23)" (p. 152). But the point surely is that his wife's loyalty means that he had "no such baseness" in his *not* being ultimately Judas-like, not being a betrayer for mercenary reasons alone, yet did have another kind of baseness, namely a black shade naturally associated with dark-skinned people and without apparent racist overtones.

Yet, as I stated earlier in this essay, my purpose is not to be wholly negative; I do admire Holmer's other scholarship in her paper, and I appreciate her eloquent Christian framework which she accommodates, however wrong-headedly, to this tragedy. What more can finally be said in direct support of the other reading which she so resolutely dismisses, "base Indian"? Perhaps a few things.

To begin, I should say that I see the Moor as most probably a Moslem before his conversion to Christianity; since Iago refers to Othello's baptism, it is reasonable to believe that the hero was converted upon wedding an Italian Catholic. In his final moments, he reverts to a non-Christian code, probably a

throwback to his Moorish background. The Islamic heritage would have some bearing on his referring to himself as an Asiatic Indian at the end insofar as Moslems also lived in India and at times looked down upon lowly Hindus. Before taking his own life, Othello could say pathetically that he was like a lowly member of a rival religious group. Such a reading would reinforce the view that he has a native residing near the Indian Ocean in mind, for American Indians did not generally convert to the Hindu faith, of course.

But perhaps the most startling "new" evidence is textual. Although the notion of a "u" being an inverted "n" has often been cited as relevant to the crux (the question mainly being whether the error can better be explained as a "turned letter" or more likely as "foul case,"¹⁷ albeit I would also include the possibility of misread stroke-lettering),¹⁸ a real example has not been presented in the play to reveal a similar kind of misprint. This I believe I can now do.

The analogous textual crux is that in II. iii. 316. The problem there is whether *deuotement*, which appears in the Folio, is preferable to the Quarto's *denotement*.¹⁹ It is a commonplace that scholarship has in general agreed that the error in the 1623 text was another *u/n* problem which was not caught again because the Folio was not proofread against original copy, as Hinman and others who have worked with the Folio scientifically have proved. Thus, the Folio reading has again been corrected. The consequence is that *denotement*, like *Indian*, represents the pre-eminent Shakespearian meaning. In both cruxes, the *n* was misread as a *u*. The added parentheses do not help.²⁰

In sum, it would have been elementary for a rapid proofreader to fancy that he was reading "base Judean" and that it made sense, even as he could have read "devotement" the same way. The moral is that such ingenuity ought not to permit us to follow in the footsteps of an absent-minded compositor or proofreader.²¹ The case of the "base Judean" is thus a matter of printer's case.

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Notes

¹Shakespearian citations are to *The First Folio of Shakespeare*, prepared by Charlton Hinman (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968) with line references to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1980). The main reference to the crux in *Othello* is to V. i. 355-60, specifically 356.

²The Pelican edition, *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin, 1972), endorses *Judean*. See, e.g., also Richard S. Veit, "Like the Base Judean: A Defense of an Oft-Rejected Reading in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 26 (1975), 466-69; Naseeb Shaheen, "Like the Base Judean," *ibid.*, 31 (1980), 93-85. (Shaheen errs in saying that Shakespeare followed Fenton and "borrowed Fenton's comparison of Othello to Judas"; Fenton does not discuss the Moor of Venice.) See also n. 4 below.

³These are as follows: "The Three Base Indians in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 22 (1971), 80-82 (only the Constable connection is seen as a plausible source, however); "Othello as the Indigent Indian: Old World, New World, or Third World?" *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (East), 114 (1978), 92-100 (but note that my paper does not rank as a specifically "Marxist" study); "A Clue to the 'Base Judean' [*sic*] in *Othello*," *Notes and Queries*, NS 28 (1981), 137-38.

⁴"Othello's Threnos: 'Arabian Trees' and 'Indian' Versus 'Judean,'" *Shakespeare Studies*, 13 (1980), 145-67. My critique is not meant, of course, to be *ad feminam*.

⁵Holmer, p. 153. The correct reference to the Hunter article should be "The Theology of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 17 (1967), 214.

⁶Lawrence J. Ross, "The Shakespearean *Othello*: A Critical Exposition on Historical Evidence," Diss. Princeton 1956 (see especially pp. 1021-22).

⁷A.C. Partridge first called the point to my attention at the charter meeting of the World Shakespeare Congress in Vancouver. George Walton Williams has followed my suggestion in his recent review of the crux in *Shakespeare Survey*, 36 (1983), 193-94.

⁸In finding an example of *Judean* as early as Lady Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam*, written 1602-5, Williams notes that "the word is scanned as a trisyllable, the accent on the second syllable" (*ibid.*, p. 194). Since Herod is referred to as a "Base *Edomite*" (also Idumean) in *Mariam*, if Shakespeare knew this work in manuscript (it was published only in 1613), he would not have recognized Herod as a Judean. Although possibly Shakespeare may have known the Cary family, no evidence exists that he saw *Mariam* in MS.

⁹Holmer, p. 147. I have added italics here and in later quotations of hers, further references to some of which will be included in the text.

¹⁰*Coriolanus*, IV. ii. 24.

¹¹See his *Shakespeare and National Character* (London: Hamlin Publ. Co., 1932), p. 284.

¹²Rodney Poisson, "Othello's 'Base Indian': A Better Source for the Allusion," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 26 (1975), 462-65. But he and Holmer confuse source with meaning. Shakespeare was hardly consistent in making his source material correspond in every respect with his settings and characterizations. Consider, for example, the Italianate source-material for *The Merry Wives*, a domestic English comedy if there ever was one.

¹³See Sonnets 33-34, *I Henry IV*, I. ii. 192, as well as my "Othello as the Indian" (n. 3 above).

¹⁴See Poisson (n. 10 above), but the connection was already made, albeit only in part, by George Lyman Kittredge. The parallel has now been made independently by J.J.M. Tobin, "Nashe and *Othello*," *Notes and Queries*, NS 31 (1984), 202-203.

¹⁵See 2 *Henry IV*, III. ii. 236, 241; 2 *Henry VI*, I. ii. 62, II. i. 13.

¹⁶It appeared in Vol. 68 (1953). Cf. Holmer, n. 64. On Siegel's addendum, see my demurrer in "A Clue to the 'Base Judean' in *Othello*."

¹⁷On this point, see Richard Levin's important article, "The Indian/Judean Crux in *Othello*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30 (1982), 60-67. He does not come to terms with Holmer, however, and his argument, although largely supportive of my views in principle, is more "pro-American" than "pro-Indian" (in the Asiatic sense). I suspect that the idea of a lowly Indian being unaware of his wealth originated with natives of India and got transplanted to America.

¹⁸See my note "The Three Base Indians in *Othello*."

¹⁹For this point, if not for my use of it, I am indebted to Standish Henning of the University of Wisconsin (Madison). It would be of interest, albeit a bit outside my specific domain of expertise, to determine if the same compositor was at work with both instances of foul case or misreading.

²⁰The parentheses around "Like the base Judean" certainly suggest an interpolation, but, as with punctuation in the plays in general, point to the compositor or proofreader more than to the playwright. It is hard to find it other than peripheral. Stylistically, it is odd, suggesting a

compositorial idiosyncrasy.

²¹The very latest information on the crux I have come across is, at least to this reader, inaccessible. It consists of a controversy on the crux in China. Ruan Shen first defended "base Judean" in "Indian or Judean—Notes in Reading Shakespeare," *Waiquo Wenxue Yanjiu* (*Foreign Literature Studies*), No. 3 (1980), pp. 134-5; Fang Ping replied, defending "base Indian" in "Better 'Indian' Still—Discussing with the Author of 'Indian or Judean?'" *Ibid.*, No. 1 (1981), p. 115; Ruan Shen then provided a riposte, "A Rejoinder to 'Better Indian Still,'" *Ibid.*, No. 3 (1981), pp. 103-4. And finally, Professor Norman Sanders in his edition of *Othello* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), presents arguments in defense of "Indian" which concur with my own; however, if the reader sees only his comment on the crux in the text (p. 185), and not in his invaluable "Supplementary Notes," he may be misled into thinking that the solution remains a toss-up.

Baroque Formal Elements in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* by Marvin Glasser

Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* has been described as a "keystone in the arch of Shakespeare's intellectual development," a result of his "consciously experimenting with structure" after 1600 (of wider significance because of his being "in the mainstream of the radical change in European aesthetics of his day"), and "almost . . . a design of philosophical positions."¹ The tenor of these comments is that the play is less an impassioned response to a dissolving order of things than a deliberate effort to craft a new dramatic form to render new conceptualizations. According to Robert Kimbrough, it may also be a new approach to form under pressure of a rivalry with other theater groups in the Poetomachia of 1601 as Shakespeare sought "to find a platform for new ideas within the confines of the old romance plot."² He suggests that Shakespeare was adopting the view of Jonson and Dekker that "sound plotting was not necessary for success in this particular period of transition and flux in London's theatrical world; novelty was sufficient to draw an audience" and also that Shakespeare was emulating Jonson's "experimental principles of discontinuity."³

Certainly the response to the "strangeness"⁴ of *Troilus and Cressida* has not been one of a close identification with either characters or circumstance. The play's want of an Archimedean point of balance by means of which we can weigh its contents and categorize them after established norms makes such an identification with our own experience difficult—the reason, perhaps, for its relatively few productions over the centuries and the typical failure with audiences of those productions. We feel repelled by something cold-blooded and programmatic about the play, as though Shakespeare had decided to take advantage of what may have been the occasion for its composition and first performance—subsidization by law students and professionals at the Inns of Court—to render with brutal candor an image of the cold abstractions that were a source of late Renaissance despair.

I take my cue for this article on the play's structure from developments in the visual arts in the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries and from the disintegration of what Michel Foucault in his *The Order of Things* calls the sixteenth century "episteme." My purpose is to use *Troilus and Cressida* as exemplification of the formal effects of the new perceptions arising from—or contributing to—the breakdown of this system of thought, formal effects that have their analogues in contemporary painting, a kindred visual experience. Dislocation of traditional modes of thought about space

and time are articulated through generic shifts, the blurring of definitive frames for place and historical emblems, and the increasingly diffuse focus of conventional character types. What had always been held as ineluctable givens in the patterns of events and human conduct were thrown into doubt as new perspectives, new lines of sight opened up. Angles of vision could be as unfixed and multiple as the planets, and could induce a shock of the unexpected as great as any felt on a peak in Darien. In addition, time also seemed to have slipped its traces as history came to be seen more in terms of the accidents of human processes and less in terms of teleological imperatives.

The Prologue to *Troilus and Cressida* announces that Shakespeare, like Homer, will begin seven years into the war with the Greeks and Trojans treading water and Achilles recalcitrant:

. . . Our play
Leaps o'er the vaunt and firstlings of these broils,
Beginning in the middle, starting thence away
To what may be digested in a play. (26-29)⁵

Shakespeare, however, had other purposes in mind in addition to giving his version of the return of the Greek champion to the fray, notably to recount once again the familiar unhappy romance of Troilus and Cressida before his putative audience of students who, if they were like most college students before and since, were an unresolved mix of sentiment and cynicism and therefore could be expected to lap it up. Chaucer's version begins conventionally in April at the beginning of the seasonal year with the lovers not having met as yet. Shakespeare, on the other hand, begins not only in mid-war but in mid-passion: Troilus already burns, and so as a soldier has been rendered "weaker than a woman's tear" (I. i. 9). No conventional type of action or setting establishes an opening frame for the romance plot, nor for that matter for the wrath of Achilles who before the play begins simply chose not to fight, for palpably limp reasons as it later appears, in contrast to the circumstances in the *Iliad* in which Achilles is reacting angrily to an arbitrary assertion of power on the part of Agamemnon.⁶ There is no literary archetype that *Troilus and Cressida* can be said to be modeled upon: neither the eschatological unfolding of sin and redemption of the morality, nor the ritual testing of spiritual worth of the mystery or of social adaptability of the comedy, nor the hybristic impetus of tragedy offers a pattern for the play's beginning. In "leaping o'er the vaunt," we are "leaping o'er" a first cause that would help shape a coherent unit of time whose kind of organization would function hermeneutically.

After that leap we "start. . . away/To what may be digested in a play"—as

indeterminate a formulation of dramatic matter as may be conceived. First of all, "digested" by what, the patience of the audience or its wits? Or do the lines refer to what would be feasible with regard to the time covered by the action, from the Aristotelian day to the Great Year? The word "digested" is also rich in other metaphorical implications, for example the suggestion that the dramatic experience is as void of enduring meaning and as gross as the processes in the alimentary canal.

Not only, then, is there an uncertain historical or dramatic reason for the play's beginning where it does, "in the middle," but there is also no clearly defined historical or dramatic conclusion. The action seems broken off at both ends, caught in mid-flight. The play ends with the wrath of Troilus and an epilogue spoken by Pandarus which opens up both the temporal and spatial dimensions of the play so that they become inclusive of the viewer's time and space—that is, of any time and space.⁷ The play breaks through traditional confines, much as western man was breaking out of his geographical bounds, heavenly bodies their crystalline spheres, the mind a fixed set. Pandarus cries:

O world, world! thus is the poor agent despised.
O traders and bawds, how earnestly are you set
awork, and how ill required!

(V. x. 35-38)

And he brings the play to an end at last by bequeathing us his diseases, a just final testament since earlier after his triumphant uniting of the lovers he had called upon "Cupid" to "grant all tongue-tied maidens *here* (i.e., in the theater)/Bed, chamber, Pandar to provide this gear!" (III. ii. 212-13) (my italics).

Through asides, direct address, and soliloquy⁸ *Troilus* persistently undermines the ontological distinction between subject and object—between the audience undergoing what conventionally is the experience of theatrical display and the self-contained entity on the stage, whole and set apart from our world except for the delivery to us of the moral or anagogical burden of the play in the epilogue.⁹ In act two, scene three, for example, the rapid-fire asides by the Greek leaders in which they mock the posturings of Ajax are consistent with the play's repeated breaching of the wall between object observed and observer.¹⁰ Direct address and soliloquy also, as well as other formal means, help shape a space mirroring that conceived by Giordano Bruno, as described by Ernst Cassirer, "extending unhindered beyond every finite border and in all directions."¹¹ The "finite border" between play as object, as emblem or sign of a deeper mystery, as a manifestation of "the prose of the world,"¹² and the empirical context of the viewer's daily life begins to

grow tenuous.

Troilus is then not only relatively "frameless" temporally because of continuities before and after the play's action, but also spatially with regard to visual perspective. The structure of several scenes contributes to this effect. In I. ii., Pandarus, seeking to whet Cressida's appetite for Troilus, finds a vantage point—"Here, here, here's an excellent place" (188)—from which he can watch with her the procession of Trojan knights returning from battle. In the distance, voicelessly, the heroes pass across the stage as Pandarus plays the straight man for Cressida's sardonic jests. Shakespeare in this scene sets up a space with Pandarus and Cressida in the foreground and the procession of knights in the remote background. The heroic theme in the play is displaced from what in a classical handling of it would be a central focus, much as in Mannerist art.¹³ The result of the perspective thrust in *Troilus* is to deepen space and set up, as in contemporary visual art, orthogonal lines of sight with the audience at the base of the pyramid. The depthless, static world of the Middle Ages as reflected in its dramatic literature is metamorphosed into a world of free objects whose positions relative to one another are subject to instability.

This relativity appears most manifestly in the scene in which Troilus, accompanied by Ulysses, secretly observes Cressida betray him with Diomedes while Thersites watches the watchers (V. ii.). Shakespeare shifts constantly from one point of view to another, so swiftly that the kind of planimetric space that characterizes the earlier scene breaks down and instead we feel the continuous if jagged rhythm of an electrical charge—an effect analogous to that of the diagonal line in a Baroque painting such as Rubens' *Christ Bearing the Cross*—as the dialogue moves with volatility from one plane of depth to another. Back and forth the focus changes from Diomedes to Troilus and Ulysses, back to Diomedes and Cressida, then to Thersites, and so on and on. Ultimately the scene becomes illustrative of Una Ellis Fermor's description of the play as "a shifting, heaving morass where all is relative and nothing absolute."¹⁴

The charged lines of the dramatic space of the scene reach the audience primarily through the force field of Thersites, whose point of view, encompassing those of both Troilus and Ulysses on the one hand and Cressida and Diomedes on the other, is transmitted to us through soliloquy. Again we become the pyramid's base, with Cressida and Diomedes as "vanishing points" in the distance. Something happens in our perception of the scene analogous to what occurs as a result of the use of perspective in the visual arts: according to Robert Klein, "the connection between the fictional space and the space of the spectator" becomes problematic because "the more perfect their continuity is, the more the perspective becomes a factor of

dramatic illusion rather than a factor of the formal composition."¹⁵ The uncertain division between object and subject is further evidence of the undermining of the classical form of the High Renaissance—that is, the kind of form which insists on hard, clear distinctions between, among other things, what is perceived and the mind that perceives it.

We have three audiences in the scene, therefore three "projective images," and therefore three "subjective perspectives."¹⁶ Consider the following passage:

Diomedes: Foh, foh! Adieu: you palter.
Cressida: In faith, I do not. Come hither once again.
Ulysses: You shake, my lord, at something. Will you go? You will break out.
Troilus: She strokes his cheek!
Ulysses: Come, come.
Troilus: Nay, stay; by Jove, I will not speak a word.
 There is between my will and all offenses
 A guard of patience. Stay a while.
Thersites: How the devil Luxury, with his fat rump and potato finger, tickles these together. Fry, lechery, fry! (45-56)

For both Troilus and Ulysses, the "objective" situation is the seduction. Troilus, not yet able to accept what he sees, undergoes a divided reaction. He trembles with the shock of the power of the attack upon his illusions, and at the same time insists on the supremacy of his "will" to control the effect of such "offenses," a claim self-evidently valid at least with regard to his immediate behavior since he does not interrupt the seduction. In lines that come soon after those quoted, Troilus declares, "I will not be myself, nor have cognition/Of what I feel. I am all patience" (61-62). The split in him widens, the self-displacement becomes schizophrenic. For Troilus there can be no fusion of objective fact—of what he knows conceptually—and the reality felt by the disjunctive sensibility that he has become. Part of him clings fiercely to the absolutes of the Platonic Ideal, and wills that faith, doing so at the cost of experience of the world. He refuses to acknowledge the truth of what Thomas Van Laan says the play demonstrates—the triumph of "history" over "role-playing" or an abstract ideal.¹⁷

And what does Ulysses perceive? "Something." He remains a disinterested observer, the scene before him being merely a show, an object, a "something." For Troilus a heroic effort is necessary to separate idea and sense evidence, objective and subjective realities; for Ulysses in his airily abstracted realm of hierarchical order and Time's oblivion, inner states are unreal. Troilus' distraught conjectures concerning Cressida as metaphysical paradox are answered with clinical detachment: "May worthy Troilus be half attached/With that which here his passion doth express" (158-59)—a

curious question, suggesting disbelief in a subjective order. Form, the hard outer line of conduct fretted into patterned structures of social behavior, is for Ulysses the only reality.

Thersites stands in the foreground of the scene. He fails to control our response despite his overview because his is after all only one of four frames of reference including our own transcendent one. The two sentences in his speech in the passage quoted shift from a third person exclamation concerning "Luxury, with his fat rump" to direct address of a synonym: "Fry, lechery, fry!" In other words, Thersites moves from a distant, indirect mode of reference to an apostrophe that brings him together in the same space with the target of his abuse—a version of the subject that he has abstracted from what he witnesses. It represents one more example of a habitual action on the part of Thersites. Another occurs later in the scene when Cressida, after briefly taking back again from Diomedes the token of Troilus' love, a sleeve, urges him to "visit me no more." Thersites comments: "Now she sharpens. Well said, whetstone!" (71-72). This bitter clown represents a counterpoint to Ulysses. The crucible of his cynicism and contempt burns so hotly and indiscriminately that it transmutes the external world entirely into its own image. Objective reality is swallowed up in these fires that consume even Thersites himself: "How now, Thersites? What, lost in the labyrinth of thy fury?" (II. ii. 1-2); "No, no, I am a rascal, a scurvy railing knave, a very filthy rogue" (V. v. 29-30).

Finally, there is the vantage point of the reader or member of the audience. It has been said that in the problem play, "all firm points of view... fail one,"¹⁸ and in *Troilus and Cressida* a reason for this might be the absence of clearly defined characters, ethical or social values, or metaphysical order. It is impossible to respond to the characters as human beings inasmuch as they have been reduced to mere anomalous patches of rhetoric, attitude, and feeling. The viewer's position with regard to the dynamics of act five, scene two, is that of a broad lens drawing in "eyebeams" from a three-dimensional baroque space alive with dramatic energy. We deliver our judgments safely from an "objective distance" that increases between Thersites and Cressida and Diomedes until in a way analogous to the processes of optical projection the latter pair become reduced to mammals. Then through Thersites the "objects" before us suddenly are made to turn and become part of our reality: "Lechery, lechery; still wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion" (V. ii. 192-93). Because his "croak[ing] like a raven" throughout has set the tone of the play, because his perspective, though it is not ours, comes closest to us experientially given his overview on the other two sets of characters, and because of the transitional effects of soliloquy, he repeatedly compels us to respond to what occurs not only as though it were something remote, a

bauble for our amusement and edification, but as something that has broken the wall between aesthetic, objective form and subjective reality.

What we respond to, then, is not the human element, the imitation of nature, but the unsettling result of the breakdown of normative aesthetic categories. We find ourselves integral parts of what we had from our previous experiences in the theater come to think of as a display—set in otherness but evoking suitable feelings—that served as emblem or sign, as an *impresa*, of some aspect of the moral, social, or metaphysical dimension of the world. But in effect the fourfold layering of space creates a manifold, continuing perspective; for the addition of a spy (Thersites) watching the spies (Troilus and Ulysses) is not merely arithmetical but geometrical. Where do they all end, these “concentric circles of awareness”?¹⁹ Who is watching us, another Thersites?

The play’s martial and romantic motifs that conventionally would have determined its genre and therefore the action to be located center stage shrink in importance to a spur for metaphysical musings, sly machinations, and mordant wit. The expectations based on tradition with which we come to the theater or sit down with the text are mocked as these generic themes are either derogated or shunted aside and we are left, bemused with shape-shifting characters and events as elusive of definition as quicksilver. The effect of the loosening of traditional form parallels what is occurring according to Rudolf Arnheim in contemporary Baroque art: “The more compellingly the pictorial space is shown as boundless, the more precarious becomes the status of central location because centrality can be defined only in relation to the boundaries of space.”²⁰

The subject of value in *Troilus* is related by W.R. Elton to the play’s “multiplying perspectives, each feeding into the next. . . .”²¹ A “de-empathiz(ing)” takes place between audience and play as “characters and events are discussed at second- and third-hand, allowing for the intervention of subjectivity and relativism.” The result is that “what is revealed is not only the mind of the valuer, but also the subjectivity of valuation itself” (p. 97). In V. ii. as well as elsewhere value is shown to be not a matter of concept but of percept, percept that changes not only between characters but within them as circumstance determines. Cressida in the scene is the object whose value is variously defined, and the measure of the difference is determined spatially. For Diomedes, at the “vanishing point,” the “greasy relic” that is Cressida is what is prized. For Ulysses she is a rat in a maze, the subject of an intellectual game in which men’s conduct is to be examined and manipulated with detachment. For Troilus—together with Ulysses in the middle distance of the perspective—the value of the “object” is also—or at least should be—educational. His problem, though, is his inability to learn because part of him

remains and will always remain fixed in the abstraction of the human ideal. He has willed the value of fidelity in Cressida and cannot un-will it. He can only displace the ideal, make it an "other" that becomes for him a motive of action, like the ghost of Hamlet's father, Isabella's chastity, or Helena's Bertram. They are "other" in the sense of their having been given a value apart from the experiential.

And as for Thersites, he values Cressida because she has reassured him of the rightness of his inbred view of the world. Twisted in body and mind, he flourishes in moral squalor.

Finally, there is the audience, whose perspective of course is the widest. Our attitude is compounded of all these reactions: we share with Diomedes a prurient interest in the looseness of Cressida; our analytical powers are at work along with those of Ulysses dissecting human behavior and motivation; we are shocked along with Troilus, our romantic yearning for enduring love disappointed once again; and we sneer at human folly and wickedness with Thersites. Perhaps, though, there is more: if not the pity of it, at least the regretfulness of it—the fact that absolutes are slippery things to hold onto in this world. There are no ambiguities in the play, rather the "recognition that, there are no conclusions."²² What Shakespeare presents us with is a play less about the relativity of values than modes of perception and the conditions that alter them.

The art of the illusionist is even more evident in the temporal dimension of the play. The Renaissance was the first age to recognize the formal effect of "organic movement," the consequences for composition of "the subjective will and the subjective emotions of the thing represented."²³ That the will and emotions are unfixed qualities is certainly a theme in *Troilus*, so a structure suitable for the deterministic thrust of classical tragedy or the cyclical pattern of festive comedy will not do. The problem play of mixed genre, then, with its vagaries of form best befits the eddying currents that characterize the late Renaissance's concepts of time and the relativity of the location of objects in space. Eschatologically, time at the turn of the century was not so much the bringer of death and final judgment as it was in the Middle Ages, as of mutability and metamorphosis. The relationship between subject and object in Baroque visual art is dynamic, a "becoming" rather than a "being" as it is in the art of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance with its established hierarchical systems. Taxonomically, according to Pico della Mirandola, one is what one does rather than what any *a priori* system of classification might determine.²⁴

The momentousness of the present, or rather of the present as part of the process of becoming, can be seen in the third act, scene two, of *Troilus* when the soon-to-be-happy lovers along with their obliging go-between

avow their faith in an unalterable union. We find near the end of the scene a complex temporal process at work. Cressida, Troilus, and Pandarus, to affirm the enduring nature of the relationship between the lovers, declare that their very names will be pledges of their certitude. The ultimate comparative of the faithful lover will become, says Troilus, "as true as Troilus" (i. 184). Should she prove unfaithful, Cressida cries, let all untrue maids in the future be said to be "as false as Cressida" (i. 197). And Pandarus urges posterity, should the lovers prove faithless to one another, to decline his name to "Pandar," and so seals the lexicographical vows. Their names will become the very signs of their conduct as time unfolds it. The taxonomic designations of the human types to which they belong will, like the formation of physical shapes, be the product of time's gestation: "Every corporal figure now appears as a total of the infinitely many particular determinations of positions through which the figure passes in its genetic process of formation. . . ."²⁵

Let these new words, Pandarus prays, endure "to the world's end" (II. 202-03), and he concludes with an "amen." Several inferences can be drawn from this "prayer." First, the static world of Biblical creation with its fixed inherent qualities designated by the names or signs Adam found in them is changing to one in which, as Johannes Kepler indicates in the just quoted passage, identity is established by what things "pass" through. There are nominal entities known as "Troilus," "Cressida," and "Pandarus," but time alone makes them "real." The idea, according to Ernst Cassirer, is also to be found in Galileo who "instead of deriving the form of activity from the dogmatic assumption of a form of being. . . begins with the empirical laws of activity, and through these indirectly gains the point of departure for the determination of being."²⁶ The exchange of vows in the scene is evidence of the breakdown in the sixteenth century of a centuries-old belief in the ineluctability of established qualities and forms, including human types. For, after all, Cressida is not yet unfaithful, Troilus is not yet true, and Pandarus is not yet a pimp. The scene is self-reflexive, with an elliptical flow from present to future, then back again. It is not a matter of time becoming "subordinate to spatial relationship"²⁷ (or, in literature, contextual design) as is said to occur in Renaissance art; rather, they become *co-ordinates* of one another as in the perspective of diagonal recession in Rubens' *The Bearing of the Cross* or Pieter Brueghel, the Elder's *Huntsmen in the Snow*. The energy of the movement from lower left to upper right in these paintings carries us toward the future effect of the movement (of character traits in the case of *Troilus*), the specific effect of the future being determined by spatial (contextual) proportions.

Absolutes of value (love, glory, fidelity) or of paradigmatic mythic characters derive not from a predetermined design, a fiat laid down in the past; rather, they are determined by a future which sifts the present and

eventually evolves—or, considering Shakespeare's jaundiced eye in *Troilus*, regresses to—a Troilus, a Cressida, a Pandarus, a Hector.²⁸ It is, of course, a continuing process.

Yet another inference may be drawn from the scene, this time about the "amen," the ratification of their aspiring uttered by all three after the vows. It can be read as blasphemous considering the nature of the act for which it is voiced. But in the secular context of the play it seems fitting enough. The angle of view of the human condition is horizontal, the landscape level. The perspective is, of course, reductive of the sacred, but on the other hand it connotes a dimension, if only ironically, for our actions that we are usually oblivious to. The consummation of their love becomes for Troilus and Cressida, at least at the moment, a sacrament. For the reflective Cressida, momentarily, it is also a course that has been carefully—in its etymological sense—determined and set upon. She is not made of the same spontaneously passionate stuff as Juliet or Viola: instead, heavy with the sense of time, she seems already afflicted with a kind of post-coital *tristesse*. The prefigured future is always with her. She's not Fortune's plaything but rather co-pilot with Fortune in setting her direction and enacting her "particular will." In the sixteenth century the image of Fortune as a wheel was often replaced by that of a sailboat.

The result is a closing of the gap between that which impels to action and that which acts. In the reshaping of the order of things that occurs during this period, the objective external world begins to become part of the subjective world. Time and space are viewed increasingly as functions of the mind as hierarchical order begins to disintegrate. Ulysses, revealing to Achilles that his love for one of Priam's daughters is known, yokes together the politic mind and divine "mystery":

The providence that's in a watchful state
Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold,
Finds bottom in th' uncomprehensive deeps,
Keeps place with thought, and almost, like the gods,
Do thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.

(III. iii. 196-200)

The radical distinction between object and subject, between what is perceived (the "mystery") and the modes of perceiving (the mind) narrows. And included in this process would be the secularization of the world, or rather the closer identification of the human and divine. The use of religious terminology in a context of fleshly consummation relates to what has been called the "metaphysical vacuum"²⁹ of Ulysses' speech on order and the play as a whole. I would argue, though, for a reverse perspective as well, for a reaching out for transcendence. God on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is

raised only slightly higher than Adam, their arms—however limp Adam's finger and form may be—are almost on a level, and the two figures constitute equally balanced masses around the center of the two fingers.

The vows, then, of the three protagonists in the scene with their prayerful envoi are analogous to the removal of spatial bars between planes of perception in act five, scene two, as well as of the temporal bars between the world of the play and the world of the audience that results from the unconventional opening and closing of the play.

Troilus is notorious for its apparently wanton disregard for the consistency of characters who keep slipping along fault lines. Shakespeare seems to dissolve not only temporal and spatial coherences but psychological ones as well. The problem of the disconcerting loss of focus for many of the characters is not resolved by the reflexive use of time as in the scene just discussed. It simply lies there, inexplicable. We are troubled by a humanistically sensible Hector abruptly and wilfully turning and supporting the very political mindlessness he condemns, a philosophical Ulysses engaged in schemes of low cunning, and a contemplative as well as heroic Achilles committing brutal and cowardly violations of the chivalric code. Subtilize it as we will, we are left with a mystery of contradictory human traits, a mystery so profound we can only conclude with Montaigne that "there is as much difference between us and ourselves, as between us and others."³⁰ The kind of integrity of type earlier literature has led us to expect simply does not exist. It is not a question of psychological or spiritual complexity, of opposing selves as in Hamlet, but rather of what strikes us as an absolute disjunction—two distinct identities subsumed under a single rubric. Arnold Hauser sees such a division in the contemporary Mannerist movement: "Underlying the image was the shattering of the sense of identity, of the self's harmony with itself, the problem of the homogeneity of character, and of how to reconcile all the things that lay behind a person's mask."³¹ The paradox is the thorough plausibility of the characters.

In his "degree" speech, for example, Ulysses employs the sonorities and impersonal moral stance of a Biblical prophet:

O, when degree is shaken,
Which is the ladder of all high designs,
The enterprise is sick. How could communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenity and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, scepters, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

(I. iii. 101-08)

Then, later in the same scene, Ulysses reveals that his own ox has been gored by Achilles' and Patroclus' mockery of "Those that with the finesse of their souls/By reason guide his [the war 'engine('s)'] execution" (209-10). Beginning from the divine point of view of the "degree" speech, in other words, he segues into his own particular angle of vanity, different only in its point of origin from that of Achilles. We have here a psychological analogue to the perceptual particularism of the Cressida-Diomedes seduction scene. There are, of course, other characters in the play (Hector, Ajax, Pandarus, Paris, etc.) not wanting in their own forms of the vice.

Ulysses' "Rube Goldberg" design to regain the services of Achilles further derogates from the initial impression we have of him. The firmness of the outline of his character is blurred, made indistinct. We find it difficult if not impossible to correlate Shakespeare's conception of the character with that of any literarily recognizable type. As in baroque art, an "alienation of the sign from the thing"³² is evident. "The baroque," Wolfflin writes, "neutralizes line as boundary, it multiples edges. . ." (65). "The old form lines are destroyed" and they become "form-alientated" (44).

The erratic shifts of Hector manifest even more flagrantly than in the case of Ulysses the tonal patchwork and broken line strokes that make up the composition of the human figure in the play. In response to a new effort by the Greeks to end the war, Hector denies having any fear for himself, but yet he feels a general unease concerning what time will bring:

There is no lady of more softer bowels,
More spongy to suck in the sense of fear,
More ready to cry out, "Who knows what follows?"
Than Hector is.

(II. ii. 11-14)

The color of fear does not lie uniformly enclosed within the figure bounds of Hector like color in a painting by Holbein or Durer, but instead is to be found in a variety of shades, with the hue of a kind of social fear going beyond individual color lines as in the "painterly" works of Frans Hals and Rembrandt. Fear and courage are not absolutes—nor wisdom and folly—definitively assigned to this or that person, but they are dependent on time and circumstance.

Similarly, the "color" of reason. Hector may breed reason in the bone, but he breathes irrationality. He has already issued a challenge to the Greeks to single combat even while urging the unworthiness of the cause of war. Later on in the scene, after citing the laws of nations concerning the husband's rights in marriage, rights deriving from the medieval belief that "nature craves/All dues be rendered to their owners" (173-74), Hector,

without changing his views on the issues involved, abruptly gives in to the romanticists:

Hector's opinion
 Is this in way of truth. Yet ne'ertheless,
 My spritely brethren, I propend to you
 In resolution to keep Helen still;
 For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
 Upon our joint and several dignities. (188-93)

Hector as nominalist entity signifying courage, chivalry, and reason becomes Hector who in the flux of time has reason and has it not, is "*today* i' the vein of chivalry" (V. iii. 32) (my italics) and tomorrow, perhaps, had he lived and did he no longer "stand engaged to many Greeks" (V. iii. 69) might have been in another. He snatches out of the flow of these qualities in the stream of psychic time" in this extant moment" what reason urges, what he wills, or what circumstances demand. As a result, these qualities become abstractions, things apart from the human vessels that give them expression. Experientially, what happens is similar to the effect Wolfflin describes for a painting by Rembrandt, the portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels, in which there is a "disintegration of the surface" as colors "change under the eye of the spectator. . . . We see that the emphasis lies no longer on being, but on becoming and change."³³

Reason, fear, love, courtesy, chivalry also "change under the eye of the spectator" in *Troilus*, a play about the process of becoming and the multiple points of view which reveal that process. We see these qualities, like colors in baroque paintings, scattered about, modulated, sometimes in shadow and sometimes in light—with the shadows predominant, given the play's subject. The structure shifts, becomes elusive and full of the effects of *trompe l'oeil*. Hector's challenge is answered by Ajax, but the fight ends anticlimactically with Hector's pronouncement of kinship. He skirts another absurdity in his fight with the "putrified core" decked in "goodly armor." Achilles' return to battle culminates not in heroic feats of arms, but in the butchery of Hector by Achilles' henchmen. And Troilus and Cressida—unlike such lovers as Romeo and Juliet who meet again if only in the tomb or Antony and Cleopatra with their clear prefiguration of a reunion in Elysium—become profoundly alienated from one another after their single night together; Troilus in heavily Latinized diction, engages in scholastic metaphysics regarding her dual nature as he watches her with his first successor. Deliberately, Shakespeare dissolves the dramatic tracteries of heroic and romantic conventions and allows the uncertain potentialities of time and will to shape events. Because of the unfixed nature of the characters and events, it may be said of them that they possess the kind of "indeterminancy" which Leone

Vivante sees as "one with the subjective infinite" and "with positivity of being, as opposed to mere existing (static. . .objectified, immobile, quantitative, numerable. . .),"³⁴ the parenthetical adjectives also having been used to describe the classical art of the High Renaissance.³⁵ The intensifying disintegration of heroic and romantic values is reflected in the dramatic structure by both the ironic fusion of the double helix plot of love and war and by the volatile, even frenetic flow of ten scenes in the last act capped by Pandarus' coupling of the time and space of the play to those of the world at large in his closing lines.

In his handling of dramatic structure, characterization, traditional themes, and generic modes, Shakespeare in *Troilus and Cressida*—as he does generally in the late plays—is turning from the patterns of centuries. To what? The play may be about disintegration and the emptiness of traditional values, there may be a "rejection of any metaphysical framework to give eternal perspective to the action,"³⁶ but that of course does not mean it is chaotic or that it cynically discounts *all* values. If love can shift to lust or hate, that does not mean love does not exist; if honor and courage can be merely the breath of reputation or be wedded to folly, still they exist. The particular incarnation is subject to mutability, but the abstraction and sign of language endure. Shakespeare's form in the late plays reflects his sense of necessity and unpredictability conjoined in our lives: will and design merge, and the startling, the magical, and the open-ended are the result in his narrative structures.

The "cosmology" of *Troilus and Cressida's* form is one of a kind of "recession" or flow, like the flow of space into the depths of a baroque painting free of planimetric divisions. Traits, like color or light, acquire a life of their own; they can be seen in widely variegated forms—even Thersites has the courage of his bitter convictions. Lechery is endemic as is folly, found even among the wise. And, as was pointed out earlier, even we become heirs of the play, sharing in the legacy of its diseases as well as its unresolved human types, sharing in its recessional movement. The unity of the distinctive conventional attributes of each character type and generic form becomes a unity of idea and structural correlative, of perspective and the proportions it gives rise to. The a-tectonic structure of the play acquires the higher "painterly" unity of the Baroque image. Shakespeare in *Troilus* has created a form that is rooted in the fact that it embodies a new conception of the late Renaissance concerning the relationship between psychology and our sense of history. Characters and events are seen as they appear from a subjective point of view, not one that conforms to an absolute, prescribed image of human nature or history. *Troilus'* tragedy is that, idealistic as he is, he cannot break with these now meaningless absolutes, so he, "skillless as

unpracticed infancy," rots before he ripens. The new literary modes resulting from changing conceptualizations of time and space that led to a new relationship between subject and object mean that in Shakespeare's late plays "'Others, Vaguer Presences'/Are built out of the meshing of life and space."

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Notes

¹Quotations, respectively, from Virgil Whitaker, *Shakespeare's Use of Learning* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Publications, 1953), p. 195; Robert Kimbrough, *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Setting* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1964), p. 71; Nicholas Brooke, "Shakespeare and Baroque Art," Annual Shakespeare Lecture, Proceedings of the British Academy (London, 1977), p. 68; and Wylie Sypher, *The Ethic of Time* (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), p. 137.

²Kimbrough, p. 3, citing an unpublished dissertation by Margaret Swanson Lucy (1956).

³Kimbrough, p. 73.

⁴Sypher, p. 147.

⁵All quotations from and references to the play are taken from the Signet Edition, ed. Daniel Seltzer (New York: New American Library, 1963).

⁶The view that Shakespeare is merely taking over Homer's epic slice of time seems to me to overlook two considerations: the inclusion of the non-Homeric Troilus-Cressida-Pandarus plot and the fact that in no other play does Shakespeare allow source material to determine dramatic form. John D. Cox in "The Error of Our Eye in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Comparative Drama*, 10 (1976), believes that "the story itself is shapeless and open-ended," but acquires "its sense of direction and purpose. . . from the larger context of the Trojan War" (p. 154) whose grim conclusion mocks the blindness and the "failure of vision" (p. 150) of the characters who gain a tragic stature as a result of this larger context. L.C. Knights, on the other hand, believes that "ambiguousness" and "confusion" result from our "preconceived notions" of the figures involved (*Some Shakespearean Themes* [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1959], p. 78). Our reaction to dramatic situations, of course, is colored considerably by who we are and what we bring to them, but for someone of Shakespeare's degree of professionalism to rely on this for such significant tonal effects and thematic purposes seems doubtful to me.

⁷Gary Taylor argues that the iteration in the Folio in both scenes three and five of act five of the following exchange between Troilus and Pandarus—

P. "Why, but heare you."

T. "Hence, brother lackie, ignomie and shame

Pursue thy life, and life aye with thy name"—

is evidence that Shakespeare had "second thoughts" about the indeterminacy that results from the play's ending with Pandarus' Epilogue "Oh world, world, world!" (*Troilus and Cressida: Bibliography, Performance, and Interpretation*, *Shakespeare Studies*, 15 [1982]). If it had been located earlier, then the play's last speech would be Troilus' apostrophizing of the "vile abominable tents" of the Greeks and his vowing revenge for the death of Hector, and it would have ended on a "tragic note." Taylor cites J.M. Nosworthy *Shakespeare's Occasional Plays* (London, 1965) as source of the opinion that such an ending would add a tragic dimension. The variant ending, however, as Taylor acknowledges, does not invalidate the authenticity of the commonly accepted closing of the epilogue, which he regards as the fruits of Shakespeare's "first thoughts." The critical reading I offer, then, is not rooted in the vagaries of redactorial practices over time.

⁸S.L. Bethell claims that for the Elizabethan audience "the soliloquies must have retained much of the atmosphere of direct address." *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1944); rptd. by Octagon Books (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1970), p. 104.

⁹Such a duality is analogous to what Rudolph Arnheim sees as the significance of the development of the pictorial frame in the fifteenth century: "The frame indicates that the viewer is asked to look at what he sees in the picture not as part of the world in which he lives and acts, but as a statement about that world at which he looks from the outside—a representation of the viewer's world." *The Power of the Center* (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1982), p. 52.

¹⁰Jean Howard sees the aside as analogous to counterpoint in music. It creates, she declares, "conflict" between the world of the character and that of his context. See her "Shakespearean Counterpoint: Stage Technique and the Interaction Between Play and Audience," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 30 (1979), 346.

¹¹*The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 187, originally published in 1927 as volume ten in *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*.

¹²Foucault's metaphor is a chapter heading in his *The Order of Things* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) and describes the sixteenth century conceptualization of the metaphysics of nature.

¹³Tintoretto, for example, deposes Mary from the center and gives foreground figures pre-eminence in his *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*.

¹⁴*The Frontiers of Drama* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946), p. 68.

¹⁵Robert Kline, *Form and Meaning: Essays on the Renaissance and Modern Art*, trans. Madeline Jay and Leon Wieseltier (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), p. 126.

¹⁶The aesthetic doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* in the sixteenth century reaches beyond questions concerning the validity of imitating nature or the social function of the arts. According to Rudolph Arnheim, the "three-dimensional view" of conventional dramatic modes and of High Renaissance (or classical) art "represents the 'objective', 'geographic' situation depicted in the work, whereas its projection profits from the freedom of a subjective perspective. The projection can offer symbolic interpretation of the scene by means of deformations and a whole new set of spatial relations. . . . But these modifications, being purely visual, leave the objective shapes and space untouched. This is true for painting, whose third dimension is purely visual, as well as for . . . stage performances which exist in physical space but whose projective images are what the observer sees." *Power of the Center*, p. 208.

¹⁷Thomas Van Kaa says that *Troilus and Cressida* illustrates "history's supplanting of "role-playing" in the delineation of character. It belongs to a genre of "plays about history." (*Role-Playing in Shakespeare* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978], p. 167.)

¹⁸A.P. Rossiter, "The Problem Plays," in *Modern Essays in Criticism*, rev. ed., ed. Leonard Dean (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 280.

¹⁹Howard, pp. 348-49. The observation is based on the perspective effect in *Richard III* of Queen Margaret's eavesdropping (I. iii.). Michael Shapiro, citing an essay by Maynard Mack as support, affirms that in *Troilus* "one function of reflexivity is to control the audience's degree of involvement in the stage illusion" ("Role-Playing, Reflexivity, and Metadrama in Recent Shakespearean Criticism," *Renaissance Drama*, 12 [1981], 152). Emotionally, perhaps, this is true. Reflection either at the moment or later on, though, makes us uncomfortably aware that since all the world's a stage, our certitudes are as subject to another's point of view and judgment as those of any figure on stage.

²⁰*Power of the Center*, p. 189.

²¹"Shakespeare's Ulysses and the Problem of Value," *Shakespeare Studies*, 2 (1966), 98.

²²Knights, p. 66.

²³Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning and the Visual Arts* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), p. 98.

²⁴della Mirandola, using God as speaker, puts it thus: "Thou. . . art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayst sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upwards from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine." *On the Dignity of Man*, trans. Charles Wallis, The Library of Liberal Arts (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, rptd. 1965), p. 5.

²⁵Ernst Cassirer, paraphrasing Johannes Kepler, p. 185.

²⁶*The Individual and the Cosmos*, p. 183.

²⁷Sypher, p. 8.

²⁸Shakespeare, says Douglas Cole, "exposes" Hector's "sense of honor and fair play. . . as a mythic delusion" contrasting starkly "with the pragmatic necessities of war," a reading implicit in the shocking image of the "putrified core, so fair without" (V.viii.1). Similarly, according to Cole, Shakespeare places Troilus "into a context that radically challenges the foundation of his status as archetypal constant lover." The result is that "his proverbial constancy. . . at the last. . . mocks itself." ("Myth and Anti-Myth: The Case of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31 [Spring 1980], 81, 82). Unlike Dante in *The Divine Comedy* who "classifies types regardless of historical location" (Rudolf Arnheim, "Space as an Image of Time," in *Images of Romanticism*, ed. Karl Kroeber and William Walling [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978] p. 4), Shakespeare in *Troilus* shows us myths and icons inherited from the past devolving into the untidy forms of the present which in turn are inchoative of future myth.

²⁹G.F. Waller, *The Strong Necessity of Time* (The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1976), pp. 22, 39, 12.

³⁰*Essays*, trans. E.L. Treshman (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, n.d.), I, p. 326.

³¹Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art*, trans. with contributions by the author of Eric Mosbacher (New York: Knopf, 1965), pp. 326-27.

³²Wolfflin, p. 21.

³³*Principles*, p. 52.

³⁴*Essays on Art and Ontology*, trans. Arturo Vivante (Salt Lake City: Univ. of Utah Press, 1980), p. 136.

³⁵L.C. Knights (pp. 78-79) speaks of the "confusions" in the play resulting from the "shifting appearances of the characters as well as. . . the trickiness and dubiety of formal exposition and argument. . ." I believe, however, that Norman Rabkin has described more accurately the impact the play has, or was intended to have, upon us when he writes of "the dazzling manner in which" it "works, giving the impression of a blinding flash, a single aesthetic moment, rather than of a discursive composition. . ." (*Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* [New York: Macmillan, 1967], p. 51.)

³⁶Waller, p. 110.

³⁷From John Ashbery's poem "And Others, Vaguer Presences," in *Houseboat Days* (New York: Penguin, 1975).

Shakespearean Tragedy The Mind in Search of the World by O.B. Hardison, Jr.

Shakespearean tragedy appears at what is generally considered a moment of transition from a medieval world view based on faith to a modern world view based on skepticism. In his classic study *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* the late Theodore Spencer¹ argued that the power of the major tragedies stems from their projection of the anxiety, amounting at times to terror, generated by the sense that the whole accepted order of things was collapsing. It is the anxiety expressed in Donne's well known lines:

And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out. . .
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
All just supply, and all relation.

This anxiety, Spencer suggested, seems relevant today because there has been a similar collapse of values in the twentieth century. To cite the recent study by Jan Kott,² which has a similar point of entry though a quite different point of exit, Shakespeare is, indeed, our contemporary.

There is a good deal in Shakespeare that confirms Spencer's theory. All of the major tragedies deal with the social order, and each of them seems to concentrate on a special aspect of it. *Othello* focuses on a collapse of values between husband and wife. *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are more explicitly concerned with a collapse of values in the political sphere. *King Lear* extends the survey to the cosmic level, while *Antony and Cleopatra* examines the experience of alienation from all values except the natural and instinctive value of sexual attraction.

This view of the major tragedies depends on the idea that their fundamental appeal is emotional. It is an affective theory and quite different from more analytic theories derived from the idea of tragedy as conflict—illustrated preeminently by A.C. Bradley³—and the idea of tragedy as character study—illustrated by Lily Bess Campbell's *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion*⁴ and from a different perspective by Willard Farnham's *Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy*.⁵ The analytic theories assume that the appeal of the major tragedies is intellectual before it is emotional. By contrast, the affective theory assumes that Shakespearean tragedy speaks eloquently because it shows modern man an astonishingly accurate portrait of the forces that are warring in his own psyche. I want to examine the affective theory further, but first, some historical perspective

will be useful.

A great deal is known about the backgrounds of Shakespearean tragedy. Its basic features were derived from a native dramatic tradition that included morality plays and dramatic romances, and it was deeply influenced by its immediate predecessors on the Elizabethan stage, principally the tragedies of Marlowe and Kyd. It was also influenced by several mediocre plays that were direct sources for individual tragedies, most obviously the *Ur-Hamlet* (assuming that it existed) and *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*. If its medieval heritage encouraged it to move freely in time and space, ignoring the Aristotelian unities that were popular in France and Italy, it was not indifferent to classical models. It picked up many conventions from Roman comedy and the tragedies of Seneca, and it drew heavily on classical materials which Shakespeare found in Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*.

Beyond these immediate influences, it was also shaped by classical dramatic theories that Shakespeare would have encountered first at Stratford Grammar School. T.W. Baldwin summarizes these theories in *Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure*.⁶ They form the substance of a great many Renaissance schoolbooks, handbooks of literary theory, dramatic prefaces, and the like. Their common source is a preface to the comedies of Terence attributed to the grammarian Aelius Donatus and written in the fourth century B.C. In addition to being a source for grammar-school lore, the Donatine preface was regularly printed as an introduction to sixteenth-century editions of Plautus and Terence.⁷

What may be called the Donatine tradition is itself a synthesis of earlier critical theories. If A.P. McMahon is correct in his study of *Seven Questions and Aristotelian Definitions of Tragedy and Comedy*,⁸ Donatus preserves a few reminiscences of Aristotle along with a great deal of Alexandrian and Roman critical theory.

The definitions given by Donatus are quite un-Aristotelian: tragedy is a story that begins favorably but ends unhappily.⁹ He identifies the tragic subject as the lives of heroes and kings, in contrast to comedy, which deals with the lives of private individuals from the middle and lower classes. He divides the tragic action into the five movements that are the "acts" referred to in Baldwin's study of the five-act structure. And he takes a firmly moralistic view of the function of tragedy. It does not exist to produce "catharsis," which Donatus ignores, but to provide moral lessons for those who read it or see it in the theatre. Tragedy teaches rulers and magistrates to avoid sins like pride and avarice that will destroy them.

The Donatine tradition is everywhere evident in Elizabethan comments on tragedy and comedy. Although Sir Philip Sidney quotes Aristotle's *Poetics* favorably in several passages, his *Apology for Poetry* is clearly Donatine.

Tragedy, he says, exists to make "Kinges feare to be Tyrants, and Tyrants [to] manifest their tirannicall humors."¹⁰ An identical position is taken by Thomas Heywood in his *Apology for Actors*, which is the work of one of the most prolific of English Renaissance dramatists.¹¹ In general, the Donatine position agrees with the positions taken by Campbell and Farnham. Tragedy's chief interest is character, and its character portraits tend to be exemplary. Campbell traces their roots to Elizabethan humours psychology and the theory that sin is a condition in which passion rules reason; Farnham emphasizes the tradition of exemplary narrative presented most clearly in *The Mirror for Magistrates*.

We have here a formula for interpreting Shakespeare. His tragedies all deal with kings, princes, generals, and members of the noble class. They all begin with prosperity and end in catastrophe, and they all have, or can be interpreted to have, a five-act structure of the kind described by T.W. Baldwin. They can also be assigned morals. *Othello* becomes, in this sort of reading, an *exemplum* of jealousy, *Macbeth* of ambition, *Hamlet* of indecision, and so forth. Let us admit that such readings are not entirely perverse. Shakespeare's dramaturgy is conservative. His conservatism is related not only to Donatus but also to the conditions of Elizabethan performance—to the conservatism of the audiences, and the equally conservative tastes of the noble patrons, who, as Glynn Wyckham has reminded us, protected the dramatic companies and brought them at regular intervals to court.

Of course, the Donatine tradition was not the only theory of tragedy current during Shakespeare's lifetime. If Shakespeare knew the Italian critics of the sixteenth century, he was aware of the ferment caused in the early years of the century by the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* following Pazzi's Latin translation of 1536. This event led to the remarkable series of commentaries that are reviewed in Bernard Weinberg's *Italian Literary Criticism of the Renaissance*.¹² The most important of these are Robortello's commentary on the *Poetics*, published in 1549, and Castelvetro's *Poetics of Aristotle in the Vulgar Tongue*, published in 1574. In general, the movement from Robortello to Castelvetro was from a conservative, essentially Donatine point of view to a radical interpretation based on the idea that drama is a form of popular entertainment and that catharsis is (at least for Castelvetro) a gradual numbing of the audience to the pain that is the staple of both tragedy and of man's life in the world. If the Donatine theory is didactic, Castelvetro's is amoral. In his view tragedy is useful because it inures its audiences to suffering.

Beyond the Aristotle commentaries, there were Italian treatises on drama that equated it with illusion and dreams, and discussions of specific dramatic genres, a form of treatise illustrated by Giambattista Guarini's

analysis of tragi-comedy. And outside of Italy there were important essays on drama in Spanish and French that Shakespeare might have known.

Complementing the critical ferment of the sixteenth century was a considerable body of Italian, Spanish, and French tragedy that might have influenced Shakespeare. The Spanish dramas tend to be irregular, like Shakespeare's, while the Italian and French tragedies tend to be stiff, formal, and mechanically correct imitations of Seneca. They are the precursors of European neoclassic drama, and a point of contact exists between them and the drama of Shakespeare's England in the work of Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke, who began the effort to reform the native English dramatic tradition by translating the *Cleopatra* of Robert Garnier.

The conclusion to be drawn from this brief review of influences is simple. Shakespeare could have known some of the *avant garde* criticism and drama being promoted on the Continent, but if he did, there is no evidence that he allowed it to influence him. Insofar as there is a recognizable body of critical theory behind his work, it is Donatine.

All of this tells us almost nothing, however, about what makes Shakespearean tragedy universal. Much of it applies equally well to the dramas of Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, Chapman, Heywood, Jonson, and a host of lesser dramatists. It is not false so much as inadequate. It can be summed up with the observation that Shakespeare was an outwardly conservative dramatist writing in a tradition that he used easily, even though he not infrequently subverted it or treated it ironically. The tradition drew its key ideas from age-old critical doctrines that were as familiar in the Middle Ages as in the Renaissance, and it looked for its precedents not to Seneca or the *avant garde* of Italy and France, but to a drama that had a continuous history in England from the fourteenth through the mid-sixteenth century.

What is it that makes Shakespearean drama universal? This is a question that goes beyond the findings of historical criticism, and it does not have a simple answer. There are apparently many valid answers, each of them a function of the point of view of the person who is answering. Directors admire Shakespeare because his tragedies have a symphonic scope that can be found in no other dramatist. Actors honor him because his roles—including the minor ones—pose demands that make other roles seem transparently simple. Critics honor him for his sense of form, which is evident even in his most gothic inversions, for his knowledge of human psychology, and for his mastery of language, whether that language is considered poetry or dialogue. Readers and audiences admire him for all these qualities and for the relevance, which is at the center of Theodore Spencer's analysis, of his plays, to their own lives.

Donatus described tragedy as "a mirror of the times and an image of

truth." It is an image that Hamlet repeats in his discussion of acting. When modern audiences experience the intrigue-dominated political world of *Hamlet* or the chaos that spreads like a cancer in *King Lear* or the alienation that pervades *Antony and Cleopatra*, they do not feel they are experiencing fictions. Rather, they feel that they are seeing images of themselves. The major tragedies therefore seem to be exactly what Theodore Spencer thought them to be and what Donatus and Hamlet had in mind when they described tragedy as a mirror of the times.

This reading of Shakespearean tragedy was enough for Theodore Spencer, but it is not enough. If emotion were the key to Shakespeare's enduring fascination, his tragedies would be no better than, and probably inferior to, the lyric imitations of Shakespeare that were so popular during the Romantic period. Shakespeare's moments of high emotion are separated by long sections of exposition, description, oratory, and the like, whereas the lyric imitations of Shakespeare are all high emotion. Moreover, when the plays are performed, the moments of high emotion point inward toward the action rather than outward toward the playgoer and reader.

To say this is to admit that although emotion is important in Shakespeare, it is always contained and defined by a dramatic context. To cite an obvious example, the advice of Polonius to Laertes was a favorite passage during the Victorian period. It was printed apart from the play and presented by doting grandmothers to adolescents about to embark on the great voyage of life. But in the play the passage is ironic, if not comic. It denotes the fatuity of its speaker, not his wisdom. In Shakespeare, that is, context always dominates content. To say this is to recognize that the art of the tragedies is not a lyric but an architectonic art. The sense of design constantly pushes Shakespeare off the printed page and into the theatre, where the lyric passages are understood not in themselves but as moments in a process that will only be completed at the end of the play.

This fact has been a central motif in the life of Shakespeare since the Second World War. Its consequences are evident not only in the burgeoning of Shakespeare festivals around the world but also in the movement of Shakespeare from stage to film and videotape. It is also evident in the current interest of Shakespeare scholars, who, before 1960, were immersed in textual and analytical problems, in every aspect of Shakespearean production from the dimensions of the Globe stage to the memoirs of prominent actors and directors of Shakespeare, an interest illustrated by the work of Alfred Harbage, Bernard Beckerman, Richard Hosley, Irwin Smith, Glynn Wyckham, Alan Dessen, and a host of others, and also by the space now being allocated in scholarly journals like the *Shakespearean Quarterly* to reviewing current Shakespearean productions.

The same interest is illustrated by the present tendency to question the equation of Shakespeare's emotions with the emotions of his plays. In *The Life of Shakespeare*, published in 1890, Edward Dowden speculated that because Shakespeare's tragedies are sombre, he must have been in a state of deep depression between 1600 and 1606, the period of the major tragedies. Dowden's chapter on this subject is titled "In the Depths." In *The Anatomy of Criticism*, published in 1957, Northrup Frye takes exactly the opposite position. Since Shakespeare was a practicing dramatist, argues Frye, he must have measured success and failure by his literary output. Between 1600 and 1606 Shakespeare was writing the finest plays since Sophocles. Instead of being depressed, he must have been in a state of continuous elation.¹³

Is it not possible that this elation is expressed in the dazzling wit, the elegant and sustained manipulation of language, and the bizarre, but at the same time, elegantly appropriate departures from the expected that crop up so frequently in the major tragedies—in Hamlet's verbal games with Rozencrantz and Guildenstern and Polonius, in the porter's immortal grumblings in *Macbeth*, and, above all, in the speeches of the Fool in *Lear*? The most apt label for the impulse that must have led to such passages is Friedrich Schiller's term *Spieltrieb*—the play impulse that is evident in even the most serious art and that derives precisely from the sense of liberation that a great artist feels when he has mastered his art—the feeling that anything, even the most improbable speech or action, can be made to work and is therefore worth trying. A similar impulse is evident in the work of a great twentieth-century poet, Wallace Stevens, who titled one of his most serious poems "The Comedian as the Letter C." Frye must be right. Far from feeling depressed while writing the great tragedies, Shakespeare must have been elated. He did not dimly suspect that he was a great dramatist, he knew it. The major tragedies are not expressions of Dowden's despair or the *Angst* posited by Theodore Spencer, but the creations of a great artist at the height of his creative powers.

This observation forces us to recognize an element in the major tragedies quite different from "relevant emotions." I have discussed this element in an article titled "Three Types of Renaissance Catharsis,"¹⁴ where I suggested that Shakespeare's tragedies strive for three kinds of appeal to audiences. The first is exemplary. As I have already noted, with a little charity one can accept the idea that the major tragedies conform in general terms to the Donatine ideal of presenting images of virtues to be followed and vices to be avoided. The second is a variant of the first. That is, without any exercise of charity at all, one can agree that the play scene in *Hamlet* and its sequel the prayer scene illustrate perfectly the Donatine theory that seeing one's vices portrayed on the stage encourages one to repent.

The third idea of the effect of a tragedy on an audience is not found in Donatus or his Renaissance followers. It is, however, directly related to the business of writing plays. It begins with the fact that tragedy is a design, an imposing of coherence on the normally incoherent world of history and of life. The human mind is, by nature, a maker of fictions that impose order on the world, and human agents were responsible for the myths that were among man's first attempts to find order in life. As myth fades into legend and legend into history, the ordering impulse takes two paths. One path leads to the search for truth, which is what history claims to offer. The other, which is the path of the artist, leads to the creation of historical fictions and, eventually, fictions that have no historical basis whatever and therefore announce the liberation of the imagination from all rules and criteria but its own. As Sidney observes in the *Apology*, "for the Poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore neuer lyeth."¹⁵ That is, the poet's fictions make no claim to truth and can only be judged on aesthetic grounds, whereas the historian, who claims to offer truth, must often lie, if only because all human knowledge, including historical knowledge, is contingent.

There is a reading of the *Poetics* that translates Greek *katharsis* with the English word "clarification."¹⁶ "Clarification" is a legitimate translation of *katharsis*, though I do not suggest that it will eventually replace all other possible translations of that much-debated word. Its virtue in relation to Shakespearean tragedy is that it calls attention to Shakespeare's achievement as a dramatic craftsman and relates this achievement directly to his success with audiences. Catharsis in the sense of clarification is the result of the entire work of the drama, from its making of a credible plot from the confusing details of history, to the objectification of the plot in character and language, to the communication of the coherence through stage performance. The result of all these elements for audiences may include Spencer's relevant emotions, but it will also include the satisfaction that comes from having experienced the creation of order in a world that is essentially chaotic.

Let me now turn to specifics and begin by observing that there are two kinds of order in Shakespearean tragedy. The first is formulaic, even archetypal. The second moves in the opposite direction by calling into question the formulas that account for the first kind of order.

To begin with the formulas, it has long been recognized that there is a regular pattern in Shakespeare's tragic plots. Each tragedy moves from an apparently stable situation through complications to a crisis followed by a catastrophe. After the catastrophe there is a suggestion that the suffering has been creative; that as a result of the action of the tragedy a new and more stable order of things has been created. The protagonists have died, but the survivors promise to heal the wounds that have been inflicted on the

commonwealth. In *Hamlet* the survivor is Fortinbras; in *Othello* the survivors are Lodovico and Montano; in *Lear* the survivor is Albany; in *Antony and Cleopatra* the survivor is Octavius, who, as Augustus Caesar, will usher in the *Pax Romana*.

I do not wish to push this notion too far. All of the Roman plays end somewhat ambiguously, and even *Antony and Cleopatra*, which has the least ambiguous ending, leaves us with a survivor who is at best a cold fish. As for the Christian tragedies, in *Hamlet* Fortinbras may be an opportunist as well as a savior; in *Macbeth* Malcolm may be a weakling who will soon be caught up in a new round of treachery and slaughter; in *Othello* Lodovico and Montano are so minor as to be negligible; and in *Lear* Albany's concluding assurance that the good will be rewarded and the evil punished is grotesquely inadequate to the debacle it tries to encompass.

In spite of these ambiguities, it is fair to say that Shakespearean tragedy quite regularly moves in its final scenes from suffering to healing and that in some way the suffering is the necessary prelude to the healing. This is not Donatine. It draws, instead, on a Christian archetype, the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall, which is at the bottom of what is for Christians the first tragedy of all, the fall of Adam. If so, Shakespearean tragedy does not order its world in terms of the formulas of Donatus or even in terms of what the Middle Ages called tragedy, as can be seen from the absolute lack of positive notes in the endings of the so-called tragedies recited by Chaucer's Monk. The formulas come, rather, from theological traditions that were domesticated by English drama in the *Corpus Christi* plays of the fifteenth century and the morality plays of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which typically end with the salvation of the protagonist in spite of his earlier fall from grace. Analogues of Shakespeare's formula can be found in dramas that precede him, but Shakespeare made the healing motif especially prominent.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the two lovers are specifically referred to by the Duke of Verona as "sacrifices" to the enmity of their families. Their deaths bring an end to the feuding that has divided the city, and they will be memorialized with golden statues. In *Hamlet*, the healing motif is underscored by Horatio's reference to flights of angels. In *Macbeth*, it has explicitly providential overtones established in the middle of the play by references to the saintliness of King Edward the Confessor, who supports Macbeth's ultimately victorious foes. In *Othello* it is suggested by a physical enactment of reconciliation—Othello and Desdemona reunited in death on their marriage bed.

Having admitted all this, one must add that although the notion of sacrificial death takes us farther into Shakespeare than Donatus, it is still inadequate. It is a tidy formula, for which considerable evidence can be

adduced, but Shakespeare honored it as much in the breach as in the observance.

In the first place, most of Shakespeare's tragic protagonists are immensely appealing. Arthur Brooke wrote an exemplary tale very much in the Donatine manner showing the bad end to be expected by children who disobey their parents. However, when Shakespeare used Brooke's story in *Romeo and Juliet* he made it into a condemnation of the parents rather than the children, who are among the most poignantly charming characters he ever created. In *Julius Caesar* Brutus is a fascinating mixture of strength and weakness, but whatever his faults he is far more attractive than Antony. If Macbeth and Timon and Coriolanus are unattractive—images, perhaps, of ambition and despair and arrogance—Hamlet and Lear and Cordelia and Antony and Cleopatra are immensely sympathetic. We do not want to see them destroyed. They resemble Aristotle's ideal hero—a supremely good man brought to misfortune through a miscalculation rather than moral weakness.

Given this fact, we cannot heave a sigh of relief at the end of a Shakespearean tragedy because good has triumphed and evil has been defeated. This sort of reaction is possible, if not entirely appropriate, at the end of a play like *Richard III*, but not for the major tragedies. The final uplift given by the sense of movement from suffering to a new and stable order is therefore not quite uplifting. We have the feeling that more has been lost than gained. Shakespeare's characters seem to feel this too:

Antony. His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man!"
(V. v. 73-5)

Fortinbras. For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royal.
(V. ii. 397-98)

Othello. One who lov'd not wisely but too well.
(V. ii. 344)

Octavius. No grave upon the earth shall clip in it
A pair so famous.
(V. ii. 359-60)

There is evidently a deeper level than moral uplift in Shakespeare's tragedies. It is the level suggested by the theory that dramatic catharsis is a clarification, an experience of coherence.

In the ideal play, one might say, everything is defined by everything else.

Nothing can be removed without loss and nothing can be added without dilution. No play achieves this ideal, but in the major tragedies Shakespeare came close. This is why one of the enduring fascinations of rereading Shakespeare's plays is the discovery of hitherto unsuspected kinds of order—the discovery, for example, that the player's speech about Pyrrhus in *Hamlet* is not a digression but a carefully worked out image of the murder that Hamlet fears he may commit if Claudius is innocent.

Furthermore—and this is the important point—Shakespeare seems to have known what he was doing. I do not believe he achieved his sense of artistry from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which he probably did not know and would not have understood if he had known it, or from Donatus or Sidney, both of whom he probably did know. He derived it, if anywhere, from the experience of writing plays; and by the time of the major tragedies, he was applying it as conscious principle.

I have offered the evidence for this conclusion in the article mentioned earlier on Renaissance catharsis and therefore will summarize it here.¹⁷ At the end of *Hamlet* we are told by Horatio that because of the catastrophes at the Danish court, the people's minds are "wild" and they are threatening "plots and errors." Something must be done immediately to calm them. The solution has been offered by Hamlet, himself, just before his death. He has asked Horatio to tell his story exactly as it happened—"with the occurments, more and less, that have solicited."

If these lines are to be taken seriously, Horatio has been commanded to tell the story of Hamlet with all its details—"the occurments, more and less." The full story, however, is the play *Hamlet*, unless we assume that Shakespeare intentionally included "occurments, more and less" in the play that are irrelevant to it. Fortinbras responds to the threat of rebellion and the problem of the "wild" minds of the people by ordering Horatio to ascend the platform, which he calls a "stage," and begin Hamlet's story. The intended result is catharsis in a literal sense. The turbulence will be calmed, and the "wild" minds will be tamed.

In this sequence Shakespeare makes an explicit link between telling a story properly—"with the occurments more and less"—and the effect the story will have. The story in this case is one of his greatest tragedies, and the effect will be to calm turbulent minds. Without wishing to push the conclusion too far, I suggest that what we hear at the end of *Hamlet* is something like the clarification theory of catharsis, and that the clarification is not produced by a sudden turn of events but by the working out of all the details of the play—the occurments more and less—as they unfold before the audience. Just before his death Othello makes a request that is similar to Hamlet's. He, too, wants his story told exactly as it happened, which is

presumably the way Shakespeare told it:

I pray you, in your letters,
 When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
 Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate,
 Nor set down aught in malice.

(V. ii. 340-342)

I do not mean to say that every Shakespearean tragedy ends with a proclamation of its own coherence. The fact that such a proclamation occurs in one and perhaps two of the tragedies, however, reveals something about Shakespeare's understanding of his art. It points to the elements of design and craftsmanship. Beyond the appeal that Theodore Spencer found in the tragedies as mirrors of our own frightening and frustrating age and the perhaps deeper appeal that comes from their use of Christian archetype, we must therefore recognize an appeal that comes from their enactment of coherence, whether that enactment takes place on the stage or in our imaginations as we read.

This leads to a final point. Aristotle claims in the *Poetics* that tragedy is normally based on history but is more philosophical and universal. Shakespeare's tragic plots are drawn chiefly from Plutarch and Holinshed, that is, from history and legend. They regularly modify their sources, and the results are in some sense better than the sources. Occasionally one suspects that the plays give a clearer sense of motivation than the sources and are in this sense better history. If this is the case, the plays are occasionally like Joseph Conrad's *Chance* and William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*, both of which show characters discovering truth by narrating historical events and, in the process, revising them because the accepted versions lack probability. However, the essential truth of the tragedies lies not in their use of historical detail but in their integrity as images of life.

To achieve this integrity Shakespeare had to place his materials in a much larger perspective than the perspective available in his sources. In effect, he had to make assumptions about the principles of order on which the worlds of his tragedies were based. The point is illustrated by James Simmons' study *Shakespeare's Roman Plays*.¹⁸ In this study Simmons shows that there is a sharp division, not accounted for by any of the immediate historical sources, between the pagan and the Christian dramas. The Greek and Roman characters live in a secular world. They are trapped because there is no power in this world higher than the state, which is, itself, merely the source of secular power and consequently the object of an endless struggle between would-be rulers. The noblest Roman of them all, Brutus, dies baffled, frustrated, and outmaneuvered by those who are less blind than he to the

demands of *Realpolitik*. For both Antony and Octavius, Roman honor is a slogan to be used to enslave those naive enough to believe in it, and Antony finally decides that love is better than honor, even if it is nothing more than lust.

In the Christian tragedies, conversely, the characters are aware of absolutes that transcend *Realpolitik*. Claudius and Macbeth are villains, but they are tormented by their villainy. Othello and Hamlet both fail disastrously, but they achieve nobility in spite of their failures. *King Lear* can be regarded as either a pagan or a Christian play, but its metaphysical assumptions are clearly those of the Christian rather than the pagan tragedies. Lear takes the gods seriously, and wherever Kent and Cordelia have found their values, they are the Christian values of charity, love, and sacrifice.

The point is that the historical worlds of the tragedies are more coherent than the worlds described in the histories that were their sources. Evidently, drama, especially Shakespearean drama, is "more philosophical and more universal" than history in the most literal sense.

This is not the whole story. It is not even the whole beginning of the story, but it is a step in the right direction. Coherence is the quality at the center of Shakespearean tragedy. It is a quality that is communicated in reading but is most fully expressed in performance and that Shakespeare, himself, seems to have recognized in his treatment of sources, his construction of plots, and his occasional comments on how the plays are supposed to affect audiences. It is a quality that stands at the opposite pole from the relevant emotions that Spencer regards as the source of the modern appeal of the tragedies.

If Shakespeare agreed with Donne that the world of the early seventeenth century was "all in pieces, all coherence gone," he responded by creating his own coherence. And if he agreed with Sidney that the poet "nothing affirms, and therefore he neuer lyeth," he might also have agreed with Wallace Stevens that the business of the artist is the creating of fictions—if possible, supreme fictions—of order. If so, the working out of each of the tragedies is not so much a mirror of our own unhappy age as a mirror of the path of the mind in its perennial search for the world.

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Notes

¹*Shakespeare and the Nature of Man* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1945), esp. pp. viii-x, 220-22.

²*Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964).

³*Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1904).

⁴Lily Bess Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930).

⁵Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936).

⁶*William Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1947).

⁷The Latin text of the two essays, one of which is probably by Euanthius rather than Donatus, is in the Teubner edition of the *Commentarium Terentii*, ed. Paul Wessner (2 vols.; Leipzig, 1902-5). For a translation, see *Classical and Medieval Criticism*, ed. Preminger, Hardison, and Golden (N.Y.: Ungar, 1974), pp. 301-09.

⁸A.P. McMahon, *Seven Questions on Aristotelian Definitions of Tragedy and Comedy*, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 40 (1929), 97-198. Still central in all questions involving the relation of Renaissance literary theory to dramatic practice is Madeline Doran, *Endeavors of Art* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954). See also Marvin T. Herrick, *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century* (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963).

⁹Aristotle, of course, considered *Iphigenia in Tauris*, which ends happily, an exemplary tragedy, almost on a par with *Oedipus*. Cf. *Poetics*, XIV, XVI, XVII.

¹⁰*Apology*, ed. Hardison, *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance*, (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts), p. 122.

¹¹Heywood's *Apology for Actors* is reprinted in Hardison, ed., *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance*, pp. 221-31.

¹²*A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (2 vols.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

¹³*The Anatomy of Criticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 94.

¹⁴In *Renaissance Drama*, N.S., 2 (1968), 3-22.

¹⁵*Apology*, ed. Hardison, *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance*, p. 128.

¹⁶See Golden and Hardison, *Aristotle's Poetics for Students of Literature* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 113-20, 133-37, and bibliography, p. 299.

¹⁷See note 14.

¹⁸*Shakespeare's Pagan World: The Roman Plays* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973).

Providence and the Text of *Richard III* by Chris Hassel

Until recently, most critics essentially agreed with E.M.W. Tillyard that the action of *Richard III* reveals, in addition to the intriguing malignity of Richard himself, "the working out of God's plan to restore England to prosperity." There are many articulate spokesmen for such a view. M.M. Reese finds this theme "as elaborately patterned as the verse"; "curses are fulfilled, sometimes in the very language in which they were spoken." Emrys Jones sees in the play's characterization and structure a "conception of a supernatural order that surrounds and contains the main action and from which judgment will eventually come." Moody Prior calls the ghosts "ritual messengers of divine vengeance on Richard and of fulfillment of divine promise for Richmond." Antony Hammond and C.A. Patrides think of *Richard III* as "providential ritual." Harold Rossiter writes that it presents "a rigid Tudor scheme of retributive justice." R.G. Hunter has just recently presented an arresting new defense of these general assumptions.¹

However, a significant countercurrent has run through the last two decades. In the opinion of David L. Frey, "Shakespeare rejected the theme of divine providence as found in the sources." John Wilders distrusts "Richmond's claim to be the instrument of divine justice. . . because we have heard such claims before." Wilbur Sanders argues similarly that the audience has been trained by the action of the play to have "a wary alertness about the invocation of moral sanctions." While Nicholas Brooke does not agree with the letter of their position, he revels in its spirit, conceding the divine pattern, but finding it "repulsive," and Richard, "bolder than ourselves in resisting oppression." Sanders also senses a heroism in this Richard, admiring in his last words "an intransigent naturalism that will yield no ground to the supernatural." With these last two critics, so many kneel to affirm the chastising hand of providence that the one who remains standing seems heroic by default.²

As textual editor of the New Variorum *Richard III*, I have recorded literally scores of substantive and semi-substantive textual variants that could influence our response to these interpretive questions. Many of them cluster in scenes three and four of the first act, the scenes of Margaret's prophecies and Clarence's murder. In developing Rossiter's theme of the play's "thoroughly dialectical" treatment of providence, Prior focuses on these same two scenes as those in which characters first engage some of the very issues that have so fascinated the critics.³ How inviting, then, to focus on their confluence of textual and interpretive cruxes. To the danger that such a

microscopic perspective might distort or reduce our vision, there is a corresponding advantage. Looking closely at the most important of the "wild and whirling words" of these two scenes might improve our understanding of the play's largest and most elusive interpretive issues.⁴

I. Act I, Scene iii.

Margaret's prophecies touch most of the characters in I. iii. The responses they provoke help establish those characters' earliest attitudes towards the efficacy of curses and prayers, the accuracy of prophecies and dreams, and the relationship of all of this to divine providence. They also initiate the motif of debate about those issues that characterizes much of the rest of the play. Intriguing textual cruxes thread their way throughout the scene.

The first occurs in Richard's ironic vindication of his father's curses in 3 *Henry 6*: "His Curses then, from bitternesse of Soule,/ Denounc'd against thee, are all falne upon thee:/ And God, not we, hath plagu'd thy bloody deed" (11. 648-50). Richard enjoys rationalizing his misdeeds with another piece of religious hypocrisy, but two ironies stick to these remnants of holy writ. One lies in the accuracy of the prophecy of his own forthcoming doom, the other in his own continuously ambiguous stance towards supernatural agency throughout the play. We are never quite sure just where his hypocrisy stops and his belief begins; neither is Richard. The Folio "all falne" would seem to confirm a more literal, direct intervention of God than the later "now falne." In both, however, Richard attests to God's agency in fulfilled prophecies more forcefully than if the "all" and the "now" were both omitted, as they are in Q3 and F2-F4.⁵ Most of the other characters in the play will eventually affirm the just operation of providence at their own moments of doom. As we have just seen, even Richard conforms at the last to that pattern, though briefly and with characteristic complexity. Only Elizabeth will not.

Who responds, "So just is God, to right the innocent" (1. 651)? If it is Margaret, as Rowe 1 through Theobald 2 have it, this represents a rigorous consistency in her view of curses, even those against herself. If Elizabeth, we may hear petty sniping at her erstwhile rival and continuing enemy, as much a taunt as an affirmation of belief.⁶ But Elizabeth does begin *Richard III* with a fairly conventional belief in divine providence. Giving her this line, as both the Folio and the Quarto do, would emphasize that early belief. The rubbing of chance and change will have worn it pretty thin by IV. iv.

Several interesting cruxes mark Margaret's next speech. "Though not by Warre, by Surfet dye your King" (1. 666), the Folio reading, is a much more accurate and confident prophecy than the Quarto's "If. . . ." The latter implies only that Edward will die, one way or the other. In the Folio, Margaret

foretells both how he will die and how he will not. Two semi-substantive cruxes follow: "Long may'st thou live, to wayle thy Childrens death," and "Long dye thy happie dayes, before thy death" (11. 673, 676). In the former, the Folio's comma suggests first a prayer, long life, and then the sinister reason: "to wail." Without the comma, there is only the suggestion that long life will equal long wailing. In the second line the Folio comma again establishes a rue with a difference. Each of Elizabeth's happy days should die a long, slow death, before her own death. The protracted pain of this suggestion is lessened in the alternate Quarto punctuation (live,[^]) that every editor since Pope has followed. It asks simply that Elizabeth's happiness should die long before she does. It is odd that more editors have not stuck with the more vicious comma of the Folio.⁷

Later in the scene, Margaret may predict or she may simply describe her own fate when she says, "And in that shame, still live my sorrowes rage" (1. 750). The Quarto and Folio "live" articulates an accurate prophecy; "lives," an infrequent emendation from the mid-nineteenth century, is merely a statement of fact. Next, is Margaret's speech to Buckingham, an aside from lines 761-66 ("O Buckingham, take heede. . . attend on him")? The audience hears it in any event. The rest of the assemblage does not if it is an aside, and thus Richard's "What doth she say" is more curious, more vulnerable to the power of her words. On the other hand, Buckingham's response, "Nothing that I respect my gracious Lord," would be more likely to prompt Margaret's curse against him if her warning were public.⁸ For then Buckingham's rejection of it would be a public repudiation of her prophecies.

Three other particularly interesting cruxes pertain to Buckingham's skeptical attitudes towards Margaret's curses in I. iii. First, he avers in the Folio that "Curses never passe/The lips of those that breath them in the ayre" (1. 758). The Quarto also has "breath." Yet almost every editor since Rowe has accepted his emendation to "breathe." I would revert to the two early texts. "Breath" emphasizes Buckingham's disbelief better than "breathe." It sounds harsher, more abrupt, more insulting. It also emphasizes the insubstantiality of Margaret's words better than the neutral "breathe." Cleopatra's "He words me madame" is a similar insult with similar cleverness of diction. Elizabeth in IV. iv. also reduces curses and lamentings to mere air, breath. Second, does Buckingham "soothe" the devil Richard, or does he "sooth" him (1. 771)? The former, nineteenth century emendation also has no Quarto or Folio precedent, yet almost every editor since Collier 2 has used it. "Soothing" Richard, affirming his truth against Margaret's falsehood, seems again much more effective than the change. True, "soothe" can mean "to prove or show (a statement) to be true"; "to verify, to support, back up"; even "to maintain (a lie) as being true" (*O.E.D.* 1 *Sooth* 1, 2b, 3). But this more

powerful meaning would come across better today with the spelling "sooth." All the popular emendation is likely to suggest is the blander "to tranquilize or calm, mitigate," etc. Finally, does Buckingham or Hastings say "My haire doth stand on end to heare her curses" (1. 777)? Capell replaces the Folio and Quarto "Buckingham" with "Hastings." The line seems an unexpected response from either of these worldly, skeptical politicians. Buckingham has earlier said, "Curses never passe/The lips of those that breath them in the ayre" (11. 757-58). Hastings has earlier called Margaret a "False boding Woman" (1. 718). Why would her curses make either's hair stand on end? Do they sound like scratching on a blackboard? Or does one of the men feel in his crawling skin intimations of last things? Then, which one? Since there is little interpretive reason to prefer Hastings, the Quarto and Folio precedent would seem the better choice. Once again, most of the editors since Capell have disagreed and given the line to Hastings.⁹

Our perceptions could often be altered by these selected textual cruxes in I. iii. The beliefs of Richard, Margaret, Elizabeth, Buckingham and Hastings about curses, prophecies, and providence could all take on slightly different shadings. So could our exact understanding of two of Margaret's curses against Elizabeth, and our response to the dynamics of the Margaret-Buckingham exchanges. Buckingham's attitude towards divine providence may be as ambiguous as Richard's by the end of the scene; it may be consistently skeptical throughout if the hair on end is Hastings'. The dialectic itself, within characters like Richard and Elizabeth and Buckingham and between other characters can also be altered by various cuts of this textual cloth.

II. Act I, Scene iv.

Clarence, thrust by his dreams "into the tumbling billowes of the maine" (1. 856), is also thrust in I. iv. into the midst of the theological debate. Its issues are quite literally a matter of life and death. He learns when Richard's men drown him in the malmsey butt that dreams are not always the "toyes" he once called them (1. 64). But first he disputes several theological questions with the murderers. They also debate issues of conscience and salvation with one another, and evidence quite distinct beliefs and attitudes through that debate. As in I. iii., the questions these characters discuss and the strategy of dialectic which their discussion establishes are both affected by textual cruxes.

Clarence, like his brother Edward, obviously believes in God and divine providence throughout the play. Both fear God's judgment and hope for his mercy as they approach their deaths. But Clarence is more skeptical than Edward when it comes to such "toyes" as prophecies and dreams (11. 58, 64),

especially if certain readings are chosen. For example, in I. iv., Clarence dreams either of "sights of ugly death" or "ugly sights of death" (1. 859). The former Folio reading implies that all sights of death are ugly to Clarence; death is never "a consummation devoutly to be wished." The latter (Q1) suggests a more selective eye. Clarence sees only the ugly sights of death during this dream, possibly because of his fear of God's "wrath" to come. Or is it the less threatening "will" (1. 907), not "wrath"? In the Quarto the question is moot. Clarence's entire prayer is omitted (11. 905-8). Also omitted therefore is the most deserving of the play's prayers until Richmond's. Capell has followed this Quarto lead, diminishing our sense of Clarence's piety. Finally, when Clarence dies, will he enter nothingness? Hunter's curious omission of a comma between "empty" and "vast" implies as much: "To find the empty, vast, and wand'ring ayre" (1. 875).¹⁰ The change colors Clarence's vision an even darker hue. The "empty vast" is almost as desolate a tapestry as Elizabeth's "Kingdome of nere-changing night."

Later in the scene, as Clarence fights rhetorically for his life, among the most potent weapons in his arsenal are the "wilts," "arts," and "thous" of biblical rhetoric. At least this is true in the Quarto version of several key speeches:

Hast thou that holy feeling in thy soule,
To counsell me to make my peace with God;
And art thou yet to thy owne soule so blinde,
That thou wilt war with God, by murdring me?

(11. 1083-86)

The Folio lacks six of these peculiarly Biblical words, and therefore lacks their persuasive weight as well.¹¹ Did a careless actor drop this distinctive diction as the play evolved over the thirty years between the Quarto and the Folio texts? Did an insightful actor add the distinction to the Quarto's possibly memorial reconstruction? Does that suggest an evolution from Folio to Quarto that reverses the chronology of their two publication dates? Was one of the compositors careless when he set the Quarto or the Folio text? We can only speculate today. But six such variants in four lines would be noticed by the murderer whose conscience is already bedeviling him.

In the Folio as well as the Quarto, Clarence begins using these Biblical words just as he refers to the tablets that Moses received at God's hand on Mount Sinai: "Erroneous Vassals, the great King of Kings/Hath in the Table of his Law commanded/That thou shalt do no murther" (11. 1026-28). The murderers may have suggested this strategy to him with their own words, "command" and "commanded" in the previous two lines, particularly, "And he that hath commanded, is our King" (1. 1025). Clarence's "thou shalt" is

particularly evocative of this rare moment when divine providence directly intervened in human affairs. The Quarto reads "wilt thou then" at the end of 1. 1028, intensifying the theological overtone over the Folio's "will." Further, the Second Folio has "shall" instead of "shalt," a variant which forfeits more of this associative power.¹²

As Clarence begins to explore the consciences of the two murderers, he says in the Folio: "I charge you, as you hope for any goodnesse" (1. 1021). The Quarto has again the more explicitly theological, "I charge you as you hope to have redemption,/By Christs deare blood shed for our grievous sinnes." "Redemption" replaces "goodnesse" and the reason for that redemption, Christ's sacrifice for man's sins, follows. In each of these cases the Quarto's Clarence is more "well spoken" than the Folio's.¹³

In the midst of the theological debate, Clarence, desperate, tries to make a good argument out of bad theology; "If God will be avenged for the deed,/O know you yet, he doth it publiquely,/. . . He needs no indirect or lawlesse course,/To cut off those that have offended him" (11. 1146-50). It's worth a try, but neither murderer is buying. Even their relatively unsophisticated theological minds know that God's normal operation is through second causes like themselves, however flawed those agents might be: "Who made thee then a bloody minister,/When gallant springing brave *Plantagenet*,/That Princely Novice was strucked dead by thee?" (11. 1051-53). Sinais are rare events in human history. Clarence's own actions as God's scourge argue against him here. "My Brothers love, the Divell, and my Rage" (1. 1054) might be psychologically and even theologically valid, but it does not rule out God's operation through second causes. If the crucial line, "O know you yet, he doth it publiquely," is left out, as in the Quarto, or degraded, as in Pope and Hanmer, Clarence's desperation and the clear theological point are both diminished. God usually neither rewards nor punishes "publiquely." Thus emerges a work like *The Book of Job*, and endless theological arguments about inscrutable providence, as in *Richard III*.

But if the fabric of Clarence's theological argument is more intricately woven in the Quarto, the crucial distinction between the two murderers is blurred almost beyond recognition. In the Folio they are distinct. *One* is obdurate in evil, cynical about religion, and sadistic in his pretended solicitousness towards Clarence. His accomplice, *Two*, has more compassion, more conscience, and more religious faith, despite his all-too-human wavering between better and worse, belief and disbelief. However, Quarto-influenced texts blur these distinctions. Who, for example, says "Strike" (1. 991), and how does he say it? If *One*, it is business as usual; if *Two*, hasty action before reason, the warder of the brain, can intervene. Who says "No, wee'l reason with him" (1. 992)? If it is callous *One*, the motives must be

largely sadistic; if *Two*, read indecision, even a need, however dimly realized, for the long theological disputation with Clarence. "You shall have Wine enough, my Lord" (1. 994) is similar.¹⁴ *One* would speak the line with heartless sarcasm, *Two*, full of pity and the beginnings of remorse. Still, with such altered attribution, the lines, not the speakers, would be the chameleons. Compassion, indecision, remorse would become sadism or sarcasm. The speakers would, or could, remain distinctive, their debate intact.

However, other choices would more definitely muddle the dialectic so clearly implied in the Folio's attribution of lines. Who stammers "To, to, to" (1. 1004)? If both, as half the editors have it against the Folio, the distinction between *One* and *Two* is blurred; if *Two*, the sharp edge of debate continues to operate. The "CAM group" follows Q1 in giving *One* the crucial line, "Make peace with God, for you must die my Lord" (1. 1082). Piety and compassion seem strange in *One's* profane mouth. Two earlier uncharacteristic lines are similarly given to *Two*: "Why so he doth, when he delivers you/From this earths thraldome, to the joyes of heaven" (11. 1080-81). The desire to pain Clarence with his brother's treachery is so clearly sarcastic, even sadistic, that the lines seem right only for *One*, unless there is no distinction between the two. Likewise odd, if *One* and *Two* are distinct personalities, or at least distinctly illustrative characters, is the "CAM group's" decision to give the uncertain "What shall we do" (1. 1089) to *One*. In the Folio and most other editions, it belongs to the more humane, indecisive second murderer. Finally, Neilson goes so far as to give the long, comically confused speech about conscience to *One*, and the lines around it to *Two* (11. 979-991). The effect? Briefly, it changes *Two* into an advocate for the Devil against this insinuating conscience, at least until Clarence wakes up and begins to speak. This change has no Quarto precedent. Most of the rest do. A handful of editors even follow Q in omitting or degrading *Two's* warning, "Looke behinde you, my Lord" (1. 1102). Each of these choices dulls the edge of debate that is so sharp in the Folio.¹⁵ Critics have used that edge to carve for themselves and for us the dialectic structure of this scene and to imply its use throughout the play. Their case would be more difficult to establish with a predominantly Quarto attribution of these lines.

One final cluster of textual variants in I. iv. bears upon the issue of providence. The moment: *Two's* grappling with his conscience. Just after the speech, "strong fram'd" and "strong in fraud" (1. 983) are the two mock-heroic choices describing *Two's* (or *One's*) resistance to the force that is still with him. The first suggests physical confrontation with the potent adversary, good conscience; the second implies moral commitment to its opposite, evil, or "the devil" to use their words. Within the speech about conscience, "(by chance)" is omitted in Q1 from the line, "It made me once restore a Purse of

Gold that (by chance) I found" (11.973-4). Was it by chance? As we have seen in the theologians, nothing occurs by chance in a providential world. The speaker's injection of this little parenthesis would thus seem a nice piece of willed self-deception, especially since *Two* so clearly believes in a providential, Christian universe where one can "make peace with God," struggle with an insinuating conscience, suffer God's vengeance, and also "repent me that the Duke is slaine" (1.1113). One can, that is, if one will. *Two* will; *One* will not. So it goes. Incidentally, *Two* tries earlier to deceive himself, calling his conscience either a "passionate," a "compassionate" or a "holy" humour (1.954). It is finally more than a humour to Murderer *Two*, at least the compassionate and holy *Two* of the Folio.¹⁶

Our perceptions could often be altered by these selected textual cruxes in I.iii. and I.iv. The beliefs of Richard, Margaret, Elizabeth, Buckingham, Clarence, Hastings, and Edward IV could all take on slightly different shadings. So could our exact understanding of two of Margaret's curses against Elizabeth, and our response to the dynamics of the Margaret-Buckingham exchanges. Buckingham's attitude toward divine providence may be as ambiguous as Richard's by the end of I.iii.; it may be consistently skeptical until his final soliloquy if the hair on end is Hastings'. The dialectic itself, within characters like Richard, Elizabeth and Buckingham and between other characters, can also be altered by various cuts of this textual cloth. Clarence's argument to the murderers would be much more persuasive with the distinctly biblical "wilts" and "shalts" of the Quarto, and also with its more explicitly theological reference to their hope of "redemption/By Christs deare blood. . ." On the other hand, the Quarto-influenced texts, like the Quarto itself, tend to blur the sharp Folio distinctions between Murderer 1 and Murderer 2. Such distinctions were crucial to Rossiter and Reese in their attempts to establish the dialectic strategy of the play.

Such an array of textual variants at moments of interpretive disagreement raises some important questions for the textual scholar, the critic, and the director. As these last two examples illustrate, the issues of providence are not consistently "debated" by the opposed Quarto and Folio readings, but there are clusters of readings more in alliance with one side or the other. The whole tapestry of *Richard III* would not appear much altered by pulling or adding a few of these threads. It would, however, be entirely possible to weave out of several of them a play in whose texture these providential patterns were more or less pronounced, more or less ambiguous. It is unlikely that the text of any of the hundreds of previous editions of *Richard III* is completely free of such interpretive bias. One hopes that none of these hands has woven as biased a text as would be possible with the

variety of choices available from the Quarto and Folio texts.

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Notes

¹E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (New York: MacMillan, 1947), p. 199; M.M. Reese, *The Cease of Majesty*, p. 208; Emrys Jones, *The Origins of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 204-5; Moody Prior, *The Drama of Power* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 56; C.A. Patrides, *The Phoenix and the Ladder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), p. 119; Antony Hammond, ed., *King Richard III* (New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 72; A.P. Rossiter, "Angel With Horns," in *Shakespeare: The Histories*, ed. Eugene Waith (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 67; R.G. Hunter, *Shakespeare and the Mystery of God's Judgments* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), p. 67.

²David L. Frey, *The First Tetralogy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), pp. 87, 153; John Wilders, *The Lost Garden* (Towota: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978), pp. 57-58; Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 88, 108. Nicholas Brooke, *Shakespeare's Early Tragedies* (London: Methuen, 1968), pp. 78-9.

³Rossiter, p. 84; Prior, p. 58; Hunter, p. 80.

⁴Kristian Smidt's well-received *Injurious Imposters and Richard III* (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), has challenged the long-accepted arguments in favor of Folio authority, presented most exhaustively by D.L. Patrick, *The Textual History of Richard III* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936). The consensus still favors the Folio, but the margin has diminished.

⁵649 all] Om. Q3, F2-F4; now ROWE1-JOHN2. In this New Variorum format, we have the TLN, the Folio lemma, the variant(s), and their editions listed or grouped chronologically. Appendix A must be consulted for the chronological order. I will use this form in most of the subsequent footnotes, explaining possibly confusing conventions as they occur. The quotations of *Richard III* will cite First Folio TLN, unless there is a Q1 notation for the First Quarto. Smidt's edition of *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), is an accurate and useful parallel text edition of the Folio and Quarto texts.

⁶651 *Given to Margaret* ROWE1-THEO2, THEO4; *given to Elizabeth* MAL, v1793 + (-KIT1). Here all editions in my list except KIT1 and those indicated before the semicolon give the line to Elizabeth.

⁷666 *Though*] If Q1, POPE1-v1773 (-CAP), STAU, "CAM group" [to which I refer to the common cluster of CAM1, GLO, WH1, CAM2, and RID]. 673 *live*] live Q1, ROWE1-v1773 (-CAP), DYCE1, WH1, STAU + (-HAL, KTLY). 676 *dayes*] dayes Q1, POPE1 +. This last indicates that all editions collated since POPE have omitted the comma.

⁸750 *live*] lives SING2, KTLY. 761-6 *Marked as an aside* WH2, NLSN, CAM3.

⁹758 *breath*] breathe ROWE1 + (-CAP). 771 *sooth*] soothe KNT, COL2 + (-COL3, HAL). 777 *given to Hastings* CAP, MAL, v1793-CAM3 (-NLSN, ALEX).

¹⁰859 *sights of ugly*] ugly sights of Q1, COL3, STAU-CAM2 (-HAL, KTLY, OXF1), ARD1, RID. 907 *wrath*] will HUD2. 875 *empty*] empty HTR. *Hamlet*, III. i. 63-64.

¹¹1083 *Have you*] Hast thou Q1, CAP-SING1, STAU-CAM2 (-HAL, KTLY), RID. 1083 *your soules*] thy soule Q1, CAP, MAL, v1793-SING1, STAU-CAM2 (-HAL, KTLY), RID. 1085 *are you. .your*] art thou. .thy Q1, CAP-SING1, CAM1-CAM2 (-KTLY), RID; art thou. .your STAU. 1086 *you will*] thou wilt Q1, CAP-SING1, STAU-CAM2 (-HAL, KTLY), RID.

¹²1028 *shalt*] shall F2. 1028 *Will you*] And wilt thou Q1, "CAM group"; Wilt thou CAP-SING1, STAU.

¹³1021 for any goodnesse] to have redemption Q1, POPE1-JOHN2, v1773- RANN, v1821, SING1, COL1, HUD1 +. 1021 + 1 *Line added by* Q1, MAL, v1793 + (-KNT, HUD2, NLSN).

¹⁴990 Soft, he wakes] Harke he stirs, shall I strike Q1, STAU, "CAM group"; Shall I strike POPE1-JOHN2, v1773. 991 Om. Q1, POPE1-JOHN2, v1773, STAU, "CAM group." The same cluster gives 992 to Two; so does NLSN. 994 *given to Two* Q1, CAP v 1778-HAL, KTLY-OXF1 (-WH2), NLSN, ARD1, KIT1, SIS.

¹⁵1004 *Given to Ambo* Q1, THEO, WARB, JOHN, v1773, MAL, v1793-SING1, COL1, HUD1-CAM2, ARD1, RID, KIT1, PEL1. 1082 *given to 1* Q1, "CAM group." 1080-81 *given to 2* Q1, "CAM group." 1102 Om. Q1, CAP, HUD2, WORD1; degr. POPE, HAN, DYCE2, STAU.

¹⁶983 fram'd] in fraud Q1, RID. 974 (by chance)] Om. Q1, STAU, "CAM group," OXF1. 954 *passionate*] holy POPE1-JOHN2, MAL, v1793-v1813, SING1, COL4, SIS; *compassionate* CAP-RANN(-MAL), COL2.

Appendix: Editions collated and dates

The following chronological list of editors represents the editions that I have fully collated for the New Variorum textual notes. Fuller bibliographical information, and fuller textual information from the footnotes, will be made available to interested correspondents.

Quarto 1	Q1	1597	Singer	SING1	1826
Folio 1-4	F1	1623	Knight	KNT1	1839
	F2	1632	Collier	COL1	1842
	F3	1663-4		KNT2	1942
	F4	1685	Hudson	HUD1	1851-52
	ROWE1	1709		SING2	1856
	ROWE2	1709		DYCE1	1857
	ROWE3	1714		COL3	1858
	POPE1	1725	White	WH1	1859
	POPE2	1728	Staunton	STAU	1860
Theobald	THEO1	1733			
			Halliwell	HAL	1863
	THEO2	1740	Cambridge	CAM1	1864
Hanmer	HAN1	1744	Globe	GLO	1864
Warburton	WARB	1747	Keightley	KTLY	1864
	THEO4	1757		DYCE2	1864-67
Johnson	JOHN1	1765		HUD2	1880
	JOHN2	1765		WH2	1883
Capell	CAP	1767	Wordsworth	WORD1	1883
Early Variorum Editions	v1773		Oxford	OXF1	[1891]
	v1778			CAM2	1892
	v1785		Neilson	NLSN	1906
Malone	MAL	1790	Arden	ARD1	1907
	RANN	1791	Ridley	RID	1935
	v1793		Kittredge	KIT1	1936
	v1803		Alexander	ALEX	1951
	v1813		Sisson	SIS	1954
	v1821			CAM3	1954
			Pelican	PEL1	1959
				ARD2	1981

Opportunities Seized and Occasions Created: The Boston Shakespeare Company *Hamlet* by Bernice W. Kliman

Bill Cain directed a complex, innovative *Hamlet* for the BSC's fall 1981 season, a *Hamlet* with unusual connections among the characters. This production emphasized families, Hamlet's and Polonius', and characters defined themselves through their relationships within and across the two families. Further, unlike other productions that isolate Hamlet by making Horatio his only companion, this one suggests friendship not only with Ophelia and Laertes but also with the First Player, a character outside the Elsinore matrices. Cain deepens the texture of the performance through these complex relationships. Though some of his interpretations raise questions because of inconsistencies with the text, others have a firm textual basis.

On a typical two-level stage with a dais or two and a throne, drapes at the rear create opportunities for overlapping exits and entrances. These are like film dissolves, with one startling difference: actors departing from one segment exchange glances and even words with those arriving. At the end of Hamlet's first soliloquy, for example, with Hamlet still onstage (I. ii.), Ophelia enters for the Polonius-family scene (I. iii.), singing the gravedigger's song from the final act, a recurring motif throughout this production. Hamlet joins her in the song:

In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract-o-the time for-a my behove,
O, methought there-a-was nothing-a-meet.

(V. i. 61-64)

Laertes comes on with his clothes and a traveler's chest and smiles at Hamlet, who quietly leaves. At the verge of the nunnery scene (III. i.) and Hamlet's advice to the players (III. ii.), Ophelia tries to leave but finds all exits blocked by the players. They bow to her as she finally finds a way off. Overlap also connects acts IV and V; as Gertrude downstage right tells Laertes of Ophelia's drowning, Ophelia gets on the bier and Gertrude covers her. Upstage right Claudius plots with two courtiers. Soon the gravedigger enters, gets into the open trap, and the others slowly leave. Through these dissolves Cain creates an M.C. Escher kind of space, where the upstairs lead down into another dimension; the characters do and do not occupy the same space. This transition style is typical of Cain's work, for he not only interprets but also

reshapes the text, forcing us to view the familiar play in a new light.

Cain makes the contrast between Claudius and Hamlet the propelling force in this production. Were the ghost never to appear, something would inevitably have happened between these two. If the BSC Claudius lacks complexity, that is partly the fault of the actor, David Fonteno, whose delivery betrayed unfamiliarity with Shakespeare's rhythms and whose acting was wooden. Physically, however, he was perfect for the role as Cain conceived it. His Claudius is a powerful, unscrupulous, single-minded tyrant. Hamlet, the man who thinks, weighs, who loves too much, who is willing to risk freedom, sanity and life but never willing to lie to himself, is no match for Claudius in the political arena. These two are openly hostile from the start. Hamlet sits smiling sardonically in the middle of the stage as Claudius purposely ignores him. The king reluctantly speaks to Hamlet only after a whispered hint from the courtier who will later be known to us as Osric. The prince, in turn, says scornfully, "they are actions that a man might play" (I. ii. 84), as he glances backward at Claudius. Using his enormous size as a weapon, Claudius plucks Hamlet, played by lithe, blonde, much smaller Henry Woronicz, from Gertrude's embrace downstage center, spins him around, grabs him around the shoulders, drags him and pushes him and finally deposits him on the throne upstage right. We cannot doubt who is in power.

Given their mutual animosity, as well as Hamlet's motive for revenge, we might not accept his failure to kill Claudius at prayer, since Woronicz does not portray Hamlet as too introspective, too vindictive, or too ineffectual to grasp this opportunity.² But he has made clear that seeing Gertrude and convincing her of her error is more important to him. We rush toward the interview between Gertrude and Hamlet, hardly dwelling on the lost chance.

Will this son who sees Claudius for what he is be able to convince his love-besotted mother? Played by youthful, attractive Sandra Shipley, Gertrude is smitten but perhaps a little ashamed of her hasty marriage, for when she enters the first court scene just as Claudius is announcing it, she blushing wants to leave. Restrained by him, she kisses Claudius spontaneously, lovingly. During "The Mousetrap," Hamlet snatches off her locket with Claudius' picture to underline the play's message to her. Claudius' reactions to the play, however, do not convince her about the nature of the man she has married, for she desperately tries to get the locket back when in her closet Hamlet taunts her with it, spits on it, stamps it underfoot. Soon, however, lashed by Hamlet's words, she recognizes the difference between the two men she has called "husband." And her insight holds.³ The queen laughs when Hamlet at the graveside delivers the lines about Hercules not to Laertes but to Claudius. Her bow to the king is parodic after he asks to have

her son watched. In the last scene, she steps between Hamlet and the cup, deliberately taking the poison to protect Hamlet, the only way she can see to stop Claudius.

Still, the production barely gives us time to discern that it is Hamlet who has convinced her, because Claudius' behavior after the prayer scene could cause her response in itself. Having recovered from his momentary weakness after the play, hell-bent on Hamlet's destruction, Claudius cares nothing for Gertrude. In her closet after Polonius' death, when she asks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to leave (IV. i. 4), the king, with a disdainful gesture, holds them there. The scene of Hamlet toying with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is omitted (IV. ii.), and IV. i. flows into Claudius' exile of Hamlet in England (IV. iii.). Courtiers rudely restrain Gertrude and Ophelia. Hamlet is brought on bloodied, but the two women are not allowed to go to him. A courtier even covers Ophelia's mouth to stifle her scream. At the end of this scene, Claudius, downstage alone, speaks his murderous lines about Hamlet, while Gertrude and Ophelia, alone upstage, cling to each other as they listen powerlessly. In his contempt for them he does not bother to hide his plans.

For his interpretation, Cain had to excise certain lines, such as Claudius' reiterated "Come away, Gertrude" and his declaration to Laertes that the queen "is so conjunctive to my life and soul/That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,/I could not but by her" (IV. vii. 14-16). For his interpretation, Cain draws, however, upon other portions of the play, for example the last scene where Claudius sacrifices Gertrude to self-preservation when he does not stop her from drinking the poison.

Claudius' rejection of Gertrude after Polonius' death gives Cain an opportunity to portray the women as sisters in sorrow. While Claudius plots Hamlet's death, as we have seen, the two support each other, embracing in mutual sympathy and distress. Early on, they exhibit an affinity for each other. Hearing about Hamlet's love for Ophelia from Polonius, Gertrude is overjoyed, a reaction warranted by her declaration at Ophelia's grave: "I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife" (V. i. 238). Neither woman takes part in the spying on Hamlet. When, in fact, Polonius wants Ophelia to go with him to tell Claudius about Hamlet's visit to her closet, she fiercely refuses, running off. Cain's interpretation can be justified by the text, for though Polonius says, "Come go with me. I will go seek the King" (II. i. 101) and "go we to the King" (II. i. 117), Ophelia is absent from the next scene. In Cain's version, when Polonius in the next scene mentions spying—not readily but after some thought—to Claudius and Gertrude (II. ii. 159-66), Gertrude shakes her head "No." By omitting the whole conversation among Gertrude, Ophelia, Polonius and Claudius before "To be, or not to be," Cain invites us to assume that Gertrude is not a party to and that Ophelia knows

nothing about the spying. Since Shakespeare clearly indicates that both Gertrude and Ophelia do know about the spying, Cain's interpretation violates Shakespeare's textual direction. He does, however, capture the subtext. Gertrude and Ophelia participate in the spying out of a feeling of good will towards Hamlet lacking in both Claudius and Polonius:

Queen. And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness; so I shall hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honors.

Ophelia. Madame, I wish it may.

(III. i. 38-42)

Cain chose to indicate their good will by leaving them out of the Polonius-Claudius plot altogether.

At the gathering preceding the *Gonzago* play, a still joyous Gertrude leads all in the Valentine's Day song, which becomes a strong link between the two women. When Ophelia in her mad scene sings the song, Gertrude, arm around Ophelia, joins her. Gertrude, who of course in this production does not refuse to see her (IV. v. 1-20 are omitted), delights in Ophelia's every jibe against Claudius, conveyed through tone and glance. Ophelia's madness gives her leave to say what Gertrude dare not. In this scene, Cain has Gertrude take the king's caring and affectionate lines—"How do you, pretty lady?" and "Pretty Ophelia"—while he cuts the king's line asking Horatio and the gentleman to "give her good watch, I pray you" (IV. v. 71).

The production raises a question; how could a Gertrude as sensitive and intelligent as this one select Claudius after being married to Hamlet's father, or as Hamlet says, "on this fair mountain leave to feed,/And batten on this moor?" (III. iv. 66-67). Some other productions, for example the BBC-TV *Hamlet*, shed doubt on Hamlet's portrayal of the two men by making Claudius a fine person and king. But Cain's interpretation of Claudius amplifies the truthfulness of Hamlet's description and strengthens Gertrude's *anagnorisis*:

O, speak to me no more!
Thou turn'st my eyes into my very soul;
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct. . . .
O speak to me no more!
These words like daggers enter in my ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet. . . .
No more!

(III. iv. 88-102)

The ghost appears as much to express his gratitude that Gertrude now recognizes Claudius for what he is as to chide his tardy son, for in this production it seems that her admission and not Hamlet's vehemence brings on the ghost, who comes behind her, puts his hands on her shoulders, and strokes her hair. She leans against him; when she turns, she sees him.⁴ Yet Cain retains the lines indicating she sees nothing. She refuses to admit to Hamlet that she does see. Why? Is he there to her in memory, not in fact?

Cain makes the ghost both frightening and human even before Shakespeare's text begins. As the house lights dim, on stage on the rear platform sleeps Francisco (Michael Dorsey), a lantern at his head illuminating the scene. Behind him in the dimness comes the large, majestic figure of the ghost (Patrick English), who says three times, "Remember me," as he tolls a brass bell. This prologue explains the unease Francisco expresses by the line "I am sick at heart" (I. i. 9), which Cain unaccountably omits, perhaps because he viewed it as redundant.

The austere distance of the ghost here and later in the scene contrasts with his demeanor towards Hamlet. No production I have seen has depicted such affection, such gentleness as between this father and son. At first there is some play on substantiality and insubstantiality, but this is a solid ghost. Early, he lifts the reluctant Hamlet to his shoulders; Hamlet's "I'm bound to hear" from this position elicits a laugh that breaks the audience's tension. Though the ghost's huge size and silent entrance close to the men waiting for him frightens all (audience included), the ghost, once alone with Hamlet, is tender and loving. After a few minutes of shocked hesitation, Hamlet responds with equal affection, then anguish and horror as the ghost narrates the story of the murder. This moving interpretation of their interaction does not allow a moment of doubt on Hamlet's part that the ghost is real and beneficent. When the ghost says, "List, list, O list" (I. v. 22), he takes Hamlet's two hands. As Hamlet says upon seeing the lazar hands, "O horrible! O horrible! most horrible," transposed to follow "All my smooth body" (73), Hamlet jumps up to embrace him. Shakespeare's text, Hamlet's loving description of his father in his mother's closet, licenses Cain's interpretation.

Still, the parallels between Claudius and Hamlet, Sr., which argue persuasively for their consanguinity, make problematic Hamlet's reaction to each. Both are large men; both handle Hamlet in somewhat the same way: overcome him physically, put him on the throne. (But what is a throne doing on top of the ramparts? This is another example of M.C. Escher space.) The problem of Gertrude's choice is resolved; we grasp that she has tried to replace her husband by marrying his similar brother. More importantly, Cain suggests the doubtful nature of the ghost to the audience through the resemblances to Claudius.

Hamlet expresses his eagerness to do the ghost's bidding by flying off the throne upon the words "Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift/As meditation or the thoughts of love,/May sweep to my revenge" (I. v. 29-31). The ghost demands that Hamlet not allow "the royal bed of Denmark be/ A couch for luxury and damned incest" (82-83). His main object is to separate Gertrude from Claudius. Hamlet has either to kill Claudius or to enlighten his mother. In this production, Hamlet consciously or unconsciously makes the latter choice, the more dangerous, the less direct, the less selfish, for he has nothing personally to gain by it and all to lose. To convince her, Hamlet makes up lines about second marriage to insert into *The Murder of Gonzago*. Cain makes clear which lines have been inserted by having Hamlet mouth those words during the play.⁵ Hamlet chooses persuasion of his mother over murder of his stepfather because he cares enough to want her to see the truth. That might never happen were Claudius to die before she understands.

In spite of the seemingly mandatory Freudian interpretation in Gertrude's closet scene, Hamlet and his mother have a normally warm relationship in most of their interactions. In fact, affection, which marks the relationships among ghost, Hamlet and Gertrude, energizes this production, figuring prominently also in the Polonius family. There is, however, a sharp division between Polonius' public and private self.

Polonius, played by Richard Moses, is not a bumbling dodderer or a powerful henchman, but a serious man, a pragmatist. Neither surprised nor gratified by the king's praise in the first court scene, he has accepted the opportunity proffered him—much as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have. A significant member, but not the only one, of Claudius' inner circle, Polonius orchestrates the court's clapping, a gesture of compliance, by pounding the staff of office. Cain emphasizes the importance of this gesture in several ways. In his first soliloquy, Hamlet claps satirically three times after he says "That it should come to this!"—a clear reference to Polonius' and to Claudius' political world. Ophelia imitates Polonius with spectacles and staff in the second mad scene. Finally Osric has Polonius' staff. Cain, however, offers a complex view of Polonius. While we deplore some of his actions and while we sympathize with Hamlet's anger toward him, we also notice that characters we approve of respond warmly to him. When he shows the king and queen Hamlet's letter to Ophelia (II. ii. 108), the queen is kind and affectionate. She soothes a flustered and inarticulate Polonius, who apparently is not accustomed to mix his public and private worlds. She lovingly encourages him to tell his story about Ophelia and Hamlet. Gertrude's description of Polonius later as the "good old man" (IV. i. 12) supports Cain's novel interpretation of Polonius' behavior in this early scene.

On yet another plane, Cain normalizes the Polonius family. Laertes (Sidney Atwood) and Ophelia (Ursula Drabik) are fond of each other and of their father. Charmingly bashful about his advice to Ophelia, Laertes stammers, blushes, but forces himself to say what he must to protect her. She, a statuesque Scandinavian woman, self-possessed and amused, teases him affectionately about a ring and a letter he has packed and is not at all worried about Hamlet's designs on her. Both are familiar with Polonius' advice and mock their serious father playfully, drawing him into the fun. He does not frighten them, but as soon as he speaks alone and directly to Ophelia, she listens carefully and respectfully. Though she loves her father, we gather that she nevertheless has no intention of doing as he asks. She is not a submissive, passive non-thinker.

She and Hamlet are lovers, as is clear from their response to each other in the nunnery scene (III. i.). They kiss, laugh, hug. On the floor of the almost totally darkened stage, he on top of her, they kiss intermittently. She giggles when Hamlet teasingly tells her to go to a nunnery and half jokingly castigates himself. No brutality here.

When in this scene she has to choose between Hamlet and Polonius, her choice is Hamlet. Hearing noises and seeing the glint of candles, Ophelia and Hamlet investigate. The first to find her father, shocked and grieved but also frightened, Ophelia protects Polonius from Hamlet's furious attack. Yet Hamlet evidently knows she is on his side, for later he is not angry with her. During "The Mousetrap," he jokes with her, kisses her. In the nunnery scene after Hamlet leaves, when Ophelia tries to reach Polonius to protest his spying, two courtiers prevent her, dragging her to stage left. The king speaks from the upper level while she listens suspiciously. Polonius approaches her, but she spits on him. Later, she is horrified at his death because she never had a chance to reconcile herself to him and because she sees Hamlet's justification for violence.

Cain moves her final speech of the scene to follow Claudius' "Love! His affections do not that way tend" (III. i. 162). His comment, a lie in this production, characterizes him. Because he aims for Hamlet's destruction, truth must give way. In acquiescing, Polonius, as dishonest as Claudius, is more culpable because he repudiates familial loyalty for political expediency. Ophelia's last speech then becomes a declaration of Hamlet's vulnerability before these two traitors. Here she begins to go mad.

Cain makes Laertes, even more than Polonius, maintain a hold on our sympathies—through suggesting friendship with Hamlet and minimizing the partnership with Claudius. In the first court scene, Laertes, last to leave Hamlet, places both hands on Hamlet's shoulders and smiles at him warmly. Surely it is not easy to act against the undeclared but clear wishes of the king.

To maintain the impression we receive of Laertes in the court scene and family scene (I. ii. and I. iii.), Cain both interprets and molds the text. Laertes' entrance alone to avenge his father (the production omits "Sirs, stand you all without. . . Keep the door," IV. v. 109-12), poses no danger to Claudius but to himself, making him an underdog for whom we can feel compassion. Laertes leaps on the king, who easily shakes him off, laughing at him. The queen pats Laertes, trying to restrain him, and says "But not by him" not to protect Claudius but Laertes. Cain omits the whole plot between Claudius and Laertes, retaining only the line "Laertes, was your father dear to you?" (IV. vii. 107), which is transposed to the end of the graveyard scene (V. i.), as Claudius, arm around Laertes' shoulder, walks off with him.⁶ We infer the Claudius-Laertes plot from the actions during the fencing match, but because Cain omits the scene in which Claudius flatters Laertes into complicity (IV. vii.), we cannot despise Laertes. Hamlet does not leap into the grave to attack Laertes, whom he respects, but to hold Ophelia. Cain omits as unnecessary to his interpretation Hamlet's lines expressing sorrow to Horatio about how he had treated Laertes (V. ii. 75-80). Seemingly sincere when he embraces Hamlet in the last scene after the apology ("Give me your pardon, sir. . . ." 218-36), Laertes hits him playfully-hostilely on the face while talking of honor. Both men begin with bated foils, but after the queen drinks, Laertes exposes the foil's point. With a thrust to the stomach, he catches Hamlet offguard, much as Hamlet had caught him offguard for the first hit.⁷ The king seems pleased to see the foils exchanged, to see Laertes as well as Hamlet eliminated; thus we perceive Laertes as victim also, especially when Hamlet takes his hands to exchange forgiveness with him before he dies.

The problem with this portrayal is that we wonder why Laertes would connive with Claudius against Hamlet. The production does not present Laertes as a pompous, miniature Polonius who loves to give advice although he is himself impetuous and reckless, but quite another character—in fact, the Laertes of Hamlet's description, "a very noble youth" (V. i. 218). We must accept the notion that his deep grief for his sister and father skews his sense of honor. Under any other circumstances, Laertes would have been an ally to Hamlet rather than his enemy.

This far-from-cheerless world has several people who stand by their friends: the players, for example. Taking the text's cue ("Welcome good friends—O, my old friend!" II. ii. 417), Cain expands the relationship between Hamlet and the First Player, brilliantly executed with intense energy and flamboyance by Courtenay Bernard Vance, who took the same role in the BSC's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, played in repertory with *Hamlet*. Shakespeare, of course, has Hamlet take the First Player into his confidence by asking him to insert some lines into *The Murder of Gonzago*.

Cain goes one large step further by having the First Player, who is Hamlet's contemporary, return during Hamlet's soliloquy, after the players have gone off (II. ii. 542-601), in time to learn that the play is to be a trap. The last words of the scene are the First Player's: "The king—hoo!" All the players, in fact, are aware of the plan, for when Claudius asks the play's name, they yell out mockingly, "The Mousetrap!" They adroitly step between the enraged king and Luciano, the murderer in the *Gonzago* play, and a scream from the sensuous transvestite who acts the Player Queen (Andrew Sawler) confuses Claudius into stopping. They also clap rhythmically in a parody of Claudius' court, forcing even Claudius to join in. Cain thus uses the idea from *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* that Claudius exiles the players because he believes they are confederates of Hamlet. After "The Mousetrap," the First Player is as exuberant about their success in unmasking Claudius as Hamlet is: Player, Hamlet and Horatio embrace gleefully. The other players restrain Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as Hamlet berates them.

Cain sees Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as Stoppard does—two bewildered cardboard figures brought to life for a few moments. Craig Calman and Mark S. Cartier, who recreated the parts in both plays, enter *Hamlet* playing the coin routine from Stoppard's play, wearing the same Renaissance costumes, sporting the same expressions. Though neither Claudius nor Gertrude knows Rosencrantz' and Guildenstern's correct names, Hamlet does. So yes, a weak kind of friendship had existed, but it cannot last in Claudius' kingdom after such promises as Gertrude's: "Your visitation shall receive such thanks/As fits a king's remembrance" (II. ii. 25-26). Yet they seem sincere when they offer Hamlet a gift of a recorder upon arriving, a nice touch given the pipe scene after "The Mousetrap." Although he refuses to be serious when Hamlet talks of "bad dreams," Guildenstern gives him a sympathetic touch on the shoulder when Hamlet says, "And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" (II. ii. 308). Guildenstern, in Stoppard's play, is more the opportunist, Rosencrantz more the guileless one. Some of this seems to carry through here. Rosencrantz, for example, shows a human pity for the queen in her closet (IV. iii.), but after looking at the stony-faced king, goes off. In sum, these men are not the one-sided wretches one usually encounters in productions of *Hamlet*.

Perhaps the simplest, most straightforward character in this production is Horatio (John Bower), the ever-present friend, who, with book in hand and glasses on nose, stands unobtrusively by. Everything about his relationship with Hamlet is understated, including their first meeting when Hamlet says, with no double take, "I am glad to see you, Horatio." Horatio's big moment comes at the end of the play, when for some reason Cain has him leave the dying Hamlet downstage and move upstage near the bell to say the last words

of the production: "Goodnight sweet prince,/ And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!"

Hamlet's end parallels his personal apotheosis in mid-play (III. i.). During the soliloquy beginning "To be, or not to be," he is clear-headed, not melancholy or neurotic, but pensive, making decisions about the confrontations bound to come after "The Mousetrap" reveals to Claudius what Hamlet knows. He enters the totally darkened stage all in white—white tights, white shirt—with a candle. "To be—or not," he says, with a fullstop after "not," quenching the light. On the next "to be," he lights the candle again. With "to die," he shakes his head "no"; with "to sleep," he shakes his head "yes." The unusual darkness, as well as the idiosyncratic pointing of the sentences, distracts one's attention from the suicidal references, which in any case, Hamlet brings up only to reject. Here and at the last, Hamlet, poised to live, is willing to accept death if it must come but does not mean to embrace it as a friend.

The penultimate test of a performance of *Hamlet* is the response it elicits at that bleak moment of death. In this performance, exultation at human potentialities softens sorrow and pity. A large share of the credit for this must go to Henry Woronicz for his multi-faceted portrayal of Hamlet. Bill Cain, however, deserves praise not only for his direction of Woronicz and the other actors, but also for his intelligent reading of the play that made the performance absorbing to watch but even more fascinating to mull over and think about. The text supports several of his most unusual interpretations: Ophelia's unwillingness to be a pawn, Gertrude's support of Hamlet, her attachment to Ophelia, the relationship between the ghost and Hamlet, Hamlet's choice to remove Gertrude from the influence of "that incestuous beast," Laertes' nobility, and above all Hamlet's health and wholeness. For all its excesses and liberties that the text does not support, Cain's theatrical reading will be, for those lucky enough to have seen it, a standard by which to measure future performances. That's the ultimate test of a performance.

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Notes

¹The text used is *The Shakespeare Plays: Hamlet* [BBC-TV] (New York: Mayflower Books, 1980).

²These are the usual reasons critics give for Hamlet's failure to kill Claudius at prayer.

³Perhaps she is modeled on the Gertrude in Olivier's *Hamlet* (1948), which the BSC cast saw as part of its preparation. The BBC-TV version (1980), in contrast, shows Gertrude convinced by Hamlet but then unable to separate herself from Claudius.

⁴Gertrude also saw the ghost in John Barton's Royal Shakespeare production, 1980.

⁵*The New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Hamlet, Vol. I*, ed. Horace Howard Furness (1877; rpt. New York; American Scholar Pub., 1965), 247-51, records lively disagreement among scholars about which, if any, of the lines in the *Gonzago* fragment are Hamlet's insertion.

⁶This transposition is also found in the Olivier film, though there the conspiracy is enacted in a following scene.

⁷Not with a foul as in Olivier's film. Jerome Smith, ASFD, was Fight Master for the BSC.

Credits

Fall 1981 Boston Shakespeare Company production of *Hamlet* directed by Bill Cain, with David Fonteno (Claudius), Henry Woronicz (Hamlet), Richard Moses (Polonius), John Bower (Horatio), Sidney Atwood (Laertes), Kenneth Watt (Voltimand, a captain), Jack Clifford (Cornelius), Craig Calman (Rosencrantz), Mark S. Cartier (Guildenstern), William Betz (Osric), Michael Dorsey (Francisco, a king's guard, a priest), William Hoverstein (a king's guard), John Fionte (Marcellus, a player), Jonathan Niles (Bernardo, a player), Paul Santos (Reynaldo, a player), Courtenay Bernard Vance (Player King), Andrew Sawler (a player), Thomas Lyons (a player, a priest), Jack Clifford (gravedigger), Sandra Shipley (Gertrude), Ursula Drabik (Ophelia), Patrick English (Ghost of Hamlet's father). Costume design by Craig Sonnenberg and Dru Minton Clark; set design by Larry Sammons, light design by Marcus Dillard. Fight Master Jerome Smith.

Fortinbras: The Unkindest Cut by Robert F. Willson, Jr.

I.

It is a time-honored custom in performing *Hamlet* to cut the story of Fortinbras, father and son, from the plot.¹ The main reason for this excision is obvious: it saves time in an otherwise crowded play for Hamlet to deliver his soliloquies intact and slowly enough for modern audiences to understand them. Fortinbras is also easily missed. His only memorable lines—"Let four captains. . ." (V. ii. 395 ff.)²—can be delivered conveniently by Horatio, who has already expended several words of praise on his fallen friend. Although Fortinbras's role as another fatherless son seeking revenge enhances this important motif, it is not essential for emphasis since Laertes qualifies as a serviceable, if somewhat childish, son-revenger. It is curious, however, that a character whose name means "strength in arms" and whom Hamlet gives his dying voice as successor to the throne does not appeal to more stage and film directors. (Even Olivier's film version, with its closing martial procession to the top of the battlements, leaves out the fabled Norwegian fighter.) Modern directors seem intent upon bringing out the psychological dimensions of the play, especially Hamlet's sense that Elsinore is a prison and Claudius is its chief jailer. The approach means that Fortinbras is kept out of the picture in order to intensify the image of an unhealthy or rotten state whose disease proves incurable. Tony Richardson's Fortinbras-less film (1970) is a good example of this approach, although the idea of playing Hamlet as a Freudian anti-hero was first conceived in John Gielgud's 1930 Old Vic performance.³

My argument for restoring Fortinbras is not motivated by any desire to transform a minor character into a major one. He belongs fittingly in a class with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who have also occasionally found themselves on the cutting-room floor. But directors have generally kept them as useful foils for Hamlet or convenient pawns in the game of guess-the-cause-of-Hamlet's-madness. In Fortinbras' case, however, lurking on the Danish border proves a distinct disadvantage. His two brief appearances do not bring him directly in touch with Hamlet—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hardly exist but in the hero's presence—except in the final scene, where Hamlet has already died. The inescapable conclusion about directorial thinking in this matter is that some minor characters are regarded as performing ceremonial functions eligible for cutting should ceremony be eschewed. Their ritualistic words or gestures can as easily be spoken or made by someone else in the vicinity of the crime.⁴

The trouble with this logic is that it results in the loss of opportunities for enhancing the ironic effect of Shakespearean tragedy. This loss becomes considerable for playgoers of *Hamlet* who may rarely or never read the text; they leave a reconstructed performance with little understanding of how such characters as Fortinbras contribute to enlarging the play's thematic dimensions. As I have said, there is no doubt a commonly held attitude among directors that Laertes serves adequately as a son-revenger whose dilemma provides sufficient parallels and contrasts with Hamlet's. In addition, what happens to Laertes when he is seduced by Claudius' insinuating logic is an image of what might have happened to Hamlet had *he* menaced Claudius with accusations and unsheathed sword. (Shakespeare certainly wants us to be thinking of Hamlet as Laertes barges into Claudius' presence in IV. iv. with shouts of "Laertes will be king!" echoing in the hallways.) Yet Laertes puffs himself up for his part as challenger; he is Polonius' son after all, and no valiant soldier. His heroic stance can only be called play-acting, since the character he shows us in the beginning is that of a young hypocrite ready to lecture Ophelia on her moral obligations while he travels to Paris to enjoy untaxed pleasures (see I. ii. 33-44). By comparison with Laertes, Hamlet has infinitely more reason for revenge and possesses an elevated, sensitive nature that we associate with heroic character.

Fortinbras provides a better foil for Hamlet in the role of son-avenger. One of the often underrated themes of the tragedy concerns the definition of true kingship, or, more accurately, true leadership. Rather than confronting his potential enemy in person, Claudius sends ambassadors to urge control of the obstreperous nephew by his aged uncle, old Norway. An astute leader would perceive that Norway's influence over his nephew is minimal; Claudius in fact notes the uncle's ineffectiveness when he uses the adjectives "impotent and bedrid" (I. ii. 29). Yet he persists in sending letters instead of leading troops who, judging by the opening scene, are ready and eager to fight. That Claudius' Machiavellian approach to crisis constitutes ineptness or cowardice is strongly hinted at by the later successes of the upstart.⁵

Fortinbras' actions—or feints—give evidence that he not only possesses the qualities of leadership Claudius lacks, he is also a figure whose image Hamlet most closely identifies with that of his own father.⁶ In the soliloquy about Fortinbras' courage that is so often cut (IV. iv. 32-66), Hamlet calls him a "delicate and tender prince" with "spirit and divine ambition." Such nobility could only be identified in his mind with his father's spirit, which appears in armor and ready to do battle. Put another way, Hamlet projects onto Fortinbras those traits of bravery that he feels himself lacking in; it is in Fortinbras' actions that he sees a model for his own.

Nowhere does Fortinbras state an intention to seek revenge for the

killing of his father by Hamlet's father. There is evidence, however, that his march through Denmark into Poland represents something other than a journey to win honor in a petty quarrel. Claudius announces to the court in I. ii. 17-25 that Fortinbras has pestered him with demands for the return of land lost by his father. Despite this self-proclaimed intention, Claudius grants passage through his land. In what must be one of the truly fortuitous events in all of Shakespeare, Fortinbras appears at the right moment to bury the dead prince and assume the throne of Norway's ancient enemy. He captures not just the lost territory but the whole kingdom. Has not Fortinbras become what Hamlet wished to be, an assertion that is supported by Hamlet's fatherly gesture of passing the crown to his succeeding "son"? By behaving in a heroic if ambitious manner throughout, Fortinbras has more than avenged his father's death; his victory must be viewed as a victory of ideals of leadership that are identified with the age of the fathers. Fortinbras restores a chivalric world that was poisoned by Claudius' cowardly, politic deed. Without doubt such an achievement makes him an important symbolic character in the play.

II.

The Fortinbras story deserves to be seen as central to the main plot of *Hamlet*, not as a dispensable accretion. There are four occasions when he or his actions preoccupy other characters. Horatio's recounting of the duel between the fathers and the apparent aim of young Fortinbras to win back land lost in the quarrel (I. i. 80-107) is the first instance. This speech performs several functions, not the least of which is to impress us with the scholarly cast of Horatio's style. We are made aware of the chivalric stature of both fathers, as well as of the external threat posed to Denmark by a son who cannot be dismissed as a rowdy boy. A second reference to Fortinbras comes in the next scene when Claudius contemptuously details the claims of someone he, like Horatio, regards as a peevish insolent (I. ii. 16-37). Claudius' remarks confirm the suspicion, however, that Fortinbras intends to fight for the lost territory, if not for his father's sake then for that of his country. In the course of Claudius' speech we are informed of another uncle-nephew relationship, the opposite of that between Claudius and Hamlet, and we watch Claudius' inept handling of this threat to Denmark's peace.

Nothing more is heard of Fortinbras until IV. iv., when he enters with an army to declare his intention of seeking permission to march through Denmark into Poland. His short speech, direct and authoritative, is followed by the appearance of Hamlet, who is about to embark for England in the custody of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. In a short exchange with a captain

from Fortinbras' army, Hamlet learns that they are headed for a miniscule plot of Polish ground, which will be defended to the death by a group of soldiers garrisoned there. Here, as in the first two instances involving him, Fortinbras' name is associated with the martial values of courage and honor, defined as the ability to fight for even the smallest prize when one's determination is called in doubt. The captain's words prompt the long soliloquy (IV. iv. 32-66) in which Hamlet comments on the significance of a willingness to fight and die "for an egg-shell," when he can muster not the slightest will to avenge his father's death. Hamlet's closing words, "O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or nothing worth!", must be regarded as essential to understanding the transformation in his character from one who contemplates to one who acts. The next we hear of him is in a heroic role, fighting the pirates as if he were the archetypal swashbuckler. The captain's outline of Fortinbras' intentions clearly spurs Hamlet on to a determined state not seen in his character before. Cutting this soliloquy because of a decision to delete the "minor" character referred to obviously has a damaging effect on the presentation of a major character's motivation.

The final situation involving Fortinbras is his triumphal entrance following the deaths of the principal characters. He learns of Hamlet's designation of him as successor to the throne (V. ii. 355-358), but instead of rejoicing in his victory, he moves immediately to arrange for Hamlet's burial as a soldier. It is also his task to remark the tragedy's final irony: "Such a sight as this Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss." He thereby reasserts those martial values that Claudius' politic reign has smothered.

III.

Of these four instances, the first and last emerge as most significant for an appreciation of the contrast between the orderly, chivalric world whose code Fortinbras perpetuates and the Claudian world of deception, disease, and death. Horatio's opening-scene account of the duel between the two fathers and the manner of its settlement helps us to understand Hamlet's respect for his father and at the same time establishes the duel as a formal means for settling individual differences. The tale is often forgotten because Horatio offers it as the reason for Hamlet's father's appearance dressed in armor. As is true of most ghost stories, it is the red herring that helps to build suspense but proves useless in solving the mystery.⁷ Ironically, of course, Horatio is right, since Fortinbras will win the kingdom in the end. But, more important, the account of the quarrel between the two kings represents a model of combat that is nowhere equaled in the play. By contrast, we have Hamlet's murder of Polonius, Claudius' attempt to arrange for Hamlet's murder by the

English king, and the final debacle in which poison not swordsmanship determines the outcome. Indeed, although Horatio emphasizes old Fortinbras' "most emulate pride," he takes care to point out that both men agreed to the terms of a compact before their duel began. These terms, in which the winner takes some portion of the loser's lands, were "ratified by law and heraldy," according to Horatio. It is to win back the territory his father lost that young Fortinbras has apparently put together an army. And although he has an uncle who would seek to control him, Fortinbras moves freely toward his objective. Horatio's tale suggests in fact that young Fortinbras is a kind of ghost figure himself; his dropping in and out of the action underscores the idea that he acts as an agent of fate.

But the tale is told not just to introduce the character or to identify his expansionist aims as the reason for military preparations in Denmark. The account of the duel establishes one part of a frame that is completed by the final duel between Hamlet and Laertes. By comparing the two contests we can observe how the heroic world has declined into the Machiavellian one. While the fathers agreed to a compact in advance, Hamlet and Laertes become the puppets of Claudius, who plots how to use both young men to escape from danger. Old Fortinbras' ambition could be dealt with in a rite given sanction by custom; Claudius' ambition, on the other hand, observes no moral bounds. While the first duel allows for no hidden agendas and takes place in a public setting, the second is conceived in a climate of deception and performed before an unknowing audience as a black comedy packed with deadly surprises.⁸ The second duel may be seen as a metaphor for the reign of Claudius, which is marked by the deaths of innocents like Ophelia and the advancement of such nothings as Osric. Although we are not told exactly how it was done, we have reason to believe that Claudius won the election by similar rigged schemes involving bribery and veiled threats. This style of political behavior would have been impossible in the world of Hamlet's father; disputes there came under the edicts of "law and heraldy," not the tenets of *Realpolitik*.

By cutting Fortinbras and his father's story, directors eliminate this carefully designed thematic and structural frame. The endings of cut performances tend to place too much weight on Hamlet's death and not enough on the restoration not simply of order, but of a political and moral value system that allows for the settling of conflicts between princes. Also lost is the ironic and forceful effect of Fortinbras winning the victory denied his father. Certainly in his final appearance and easy accession Fortinbras recalls Horatio's opening-scene description of his father's death. Fortune has smiled on the son without his having to raise his sword, while the two fallen sons, both victims of Claudius' evil design, present a spectacle of botched

enterprises and misplaced hatreds. Given the importance of Fortune's Wheel as an emblem of fate in Elizabethan drama, the deletion of Fortinbras lessens considerably the moral impact of the ending.⁹

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Notes

¹Arthur Colby Sprague and J.C. Trewin, *Shakespeare's Plays Today* (Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1970). p. 13. Until Forbes-Robertson's production of 1897, it was the "custom" (p. 37) of directors regularly to omit the character and story. See as well Nancy M. Lee-Riffe, "What Fortinbras and Laertes Tell Us About Hamlet," *Hamlet Studies*, 3 (Winter 1981), 103-109.

²All quotations and citations are from G. Blakemore Evans, ed., *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974).

³J.L. Styan, *The Shakespeare Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 162-63.

⁴For a discussion of recent studies that have attacked Shakespeare's "closed" endings, see Richard Levin, "Refuting Shakespeare's Endings," *MP*, 72 (May 1975), 337-349. Charles H. Sugnet emphasizes the value of ritual as a way of marking the heroic catharsis in "Exaltation at the Close: A Model for Shakespearean Tragedy," *MLQ*, 38 (December 1977), 323-335.

⁵Alvin Kernan, "Shakespeare and the Rhetoric of Politics," in *Politics, Power, and Shakespeare*, ed. F.M. Leonard (Arlington, Texas, 1981), 47-62, argues that Claudius' words and actions, especially in I. ii, demonstrate instead his political aptitude. Of course G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 4th ed., 1949), pp. 33-37, seems to have been the staunchest defender of Claudius' strengths as diplomat and king. Though these arguments are convincing on the surface, they fail to consider the compelling similarities between Fortinbras and the elder Hamlet, both of whom exemplify the "chivalric form of statecraft" that has been replaced by the Claudian power ethic. See Maynard Mack, Jr., *Killing the King: Three Studies in Shakespeare's Tragic Structure* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973). p. 77.

⁶G.B. Harrison, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951), p. 109, points out the Fortinbras' epitaph for Hamlet stresses the soldierly virtues in him, qualities that only a character like Fortinbras or Hamlet's father could recognize and celebrate.

⁷I have discussed the parallel between the ghost story motif and Hamlet's efforts to solve the riddle of man in Chapter V of *Shakespeare's Opening Scenes* (Salzburg, Austria: Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 1977), pp. 110-122.

⁸Unlike Kyd, who in *The Spanish Tragedy* uses Hieronimo's play within as the occasion for the father to satisfy his revenge, Shakespeare separates the play within and the duel. This approach allows for greater irony than Kyd achieves. Claudius believes he is the director of the charade but soon finds that he is in fact the victim of the "plot."

⁹For a sound discussion of the moral impact of the conclusion, see Herbert R. Coursen, Jr., *Christian Ritual and the World of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Buckness Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 160-62.



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