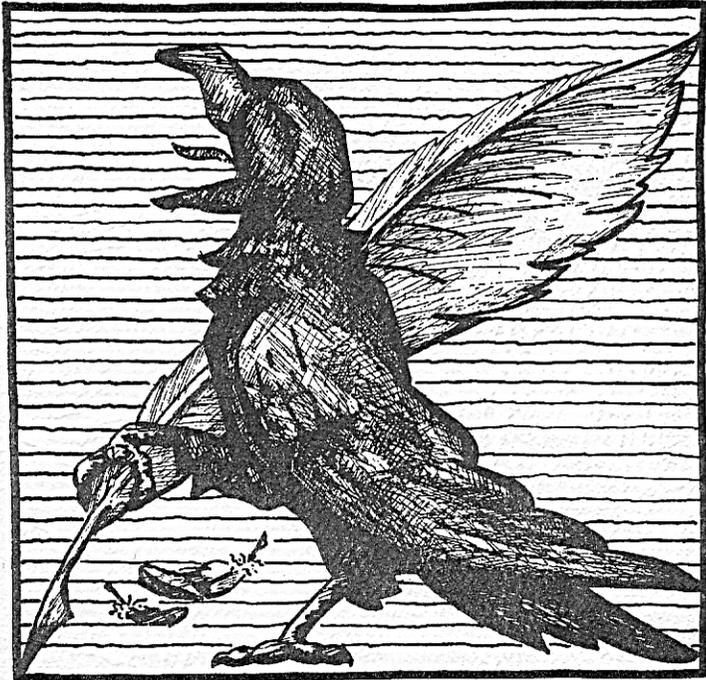


• THE •
VPSTART • CROW



1988

Volume VIII

A SHAKESPEARE JOURNAL



THE • VPSTART • CROW

Funded by Drury College

Editor

James R. Andreas
Drury College

Founding Editor

William E. Bennett
The University of Tennessee at Martin

Associate Editors

Martha Y. Battle
The University of Tennessee at Martin

Michael M. Cohen
Murray State University, Murray, Ky.

Marjorie Garber
Harvard University
Walter Haden

The University of Tennessee at Martin
Wayne Holmes
Drury College

Richard Levin
The University of California, Davis

Richard Mears
Drury College

John McDaniel
Middle Tennessee State University

Peter Pauls
The University of Winnipeg

Paul Ramsey
The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Norman Sanders
The University of Tennessee at Knoxville

and
Stratford-on-Avon
L. Frank Windham

The University of Tennessee at Martin

Ron Gifford
Artist

Published at The University of Tennessee at Martin
Copyright 1988 Drury College
All Rights Reserved

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

Essays chosen for publication do not necessarily represent opinions of the editor, associate editors, or schools with which any contributor is associated. The published essays represent a diversity of approaches and opinions which we hope will stimulate interest and further scholarship.

Subscription Information

Two issues — \$12

Institutions and Libraries, same rate as individuals — \$12 two issues

Submission of Manuscripts

Essays submitted for publication should not exceed fifteen to twenty double-spaced typed pages, including notes. Follow journal format which is traditional MLA style with slight variations. Quotations should be single spaced in typescript. When submitting manuscripts, send two copies—the original and one xeroxed copy. Allow six months for readers. If at all possible, along with hard copy, please also submit IBM floppy disk in text-file format with left margin set at zero.

Contents

Hamlet at Sea	1
by Peter Cummings	
Shakespeare's Fusion of the Arts	10
by J. L. Styan	
"Meaner Parties": Spousal Conventions and Oral Culture in <i>Measure for Measure</i> and <i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>	28
by Alan Powers	
Theories of History in <i>Richard II</i>	42
by H. R. Coursen	
"Teeth of Emulation": Failed Sacrifice in <i>Julius Caesar</i>	54
by Alan Hagar	
"Oh Scotland, Scotland": The Anti-Heroic Play of <i>Macbeth</i>	69
by David Pollard	
Gesture in <i>Coriolanus</i>: Textual Cures for Actor and Audience	77
by Paul Gaudet	
Shakespeare's <i>Timon of Athens</i> and Catharsis	93
by D. Douglas Waters	
A Wife Lost and/or Found	106
by Joyce Wexler	
The 1987 Alabama Shakespeare Festival	118
by Craig Barrow	

Hamlet at Sea
by Peter Cummings

“Ere we were two days old at sea . . .”

Hamlet, IV. vi. 15

The paradox, Horatio, of royal felony,
 in my cabin locked and sealed for death,
 but treated as the Prince. Thus vellum
 and fine quills, a walnut desk, and China tea.
 I seem to master illness now; my old nausea
 at sea apparently outgrown. But how it went
 the royal coach at midnight hies me
 to the ship, all hugger-mugger being laden
 at the Merchant's quay. Not a mouse to hear.
 I must to England for the safety of the State.

By four a.m. the heavy lines are slipped,
 sails fill darkly in a sooty lamplight,
 catch like hands the stiffened harbor breeze.
 The hull went like a spear's flight
 intent and steady, deadly. But how I thrilled,
 Horatio, to be, betimes the light, so free of walls
 and corridors—those labyrinths of whisper,
 plan, and secret on the eve of war—
 and under heavy sail. The stays to windward
 droned like lutestrings in the driven wind,
 the mastfoot creaked two decks below,
 and the wavecrests of the wake rolled densely
 as wet furrows in the April earth.
 The course is set for England. Foresail, main, and mizzen
 full before the wind, sailors on the ratlines,
 men in all the rigging—how it works us
 hard, this morning weather; how we labor
 this delivery unto death across the sea.
 The size of it! In pinking russet sunrise
 great wheeling flocks of gulls, the vault of sky,
 astringent air, and frost-white Denmark diminishing

**in the steady rising of the morning light
like a bad dream at the dawn.**

**We clear the sandhook Skaw by seven bells,
the silver waves of Kattegat blowing topspray
out toward the darker Skagerak in
galing easterner. Then, as now, the huge
horizon, chopped and ragged as a beggar's shirt,
the bone-chill cold, and raw salt whine
that sucks the breath away. The cutting rain
aslant in wind, the large-flaked sodden snow,
redness in the sky; it comes at us like doom.
Meantime, for the crew is short, I am guarded
only top the decks, lest madness make me leap.
Below, I bump along the bulkheads on my own,
every man content enough to heed
the pitch and roll, the yawing twist
of this hollow wooden world; every man
his other's helper in the larger force of storm.
The ship of death could be a casket for us all.**

**Weather ever heavier, we have to take in sail.
All hands do work, Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern batten hatches, and I
am set to chain the anchors and tie barrels.
By afternoon the thunder booms at large
and rattles down the steep-walled valleys
of the sea. It felt like correspondent
turbulence to the storming at my heart—
all twisted by events that rushed at me
too fast. Think of it, my father murdered,
my mother whored, my uncle on the throne
of blood in all his greasy passion. O God—
impossible Ophelia, innocent beyond
her years, a glimpse of heaven's beauty,
but daughter to the mewling Chamberlain. Her youth,
her straight obedience to father like a noose
around my neck. You know all that—
you know my passion for her, cut like grass;
you know my sacrifice of that sweet lamb.
About her father I am sick, withered for her sake.**

Think of it intruding foolish man!

**To present scenes: the ship a little world
 beneath the lashing lines. We fly
 across the driven wave-chop of the sea,
 a god-forsaken seascape of wide waste,
 the swirling rain whipped to spray in wind,
 the black hull cutting crest and trough
 with the pressure of a lawless need.
 All sails wrapped and bound, tackle stowed, we brave
 the elements in wrath. Sea rears against mad sky
 and seems to drown the air. Mere rugged storm
 becomes tempestuous: cosmic order breaks,
 no voice is heard above the roar of wind,
 crash of wave, and Thor's cry raving overhead.
 Design goes crazed; time itself seems broke,
 its fizzling shards come down in flame and din
 about our soaked and helpless cowering heads.
 In that mad night I hatched the plan
 to feed my traitors to the death they sought.
 What? help the sleazy King against their friend?
 Their shame would bow a vicious villain down;
 it stinks to heaven, man! They courted death
 and won her bony hand. I felt the drama
 in the action of my pen. I brought the killing
 curtain down on dupes who chose the wrong.
 In justice my eyes closed on former friends,
 composing with no grief, in stately legal prose,
 the wreathing sentences of execution.
 You shall hear more of that. Meanwhile,
 my conscience whistles like a boy of ten
 on their account. They take the blades of consequence.**

**My blood in pressured passion for my act,
 I walk the quarter deck in storm.
 This freedom granted now; they know
 that I could leap, they know that I would die
 in that fierce broth of elements gone mad.
 I tempt the thought O half in love with easy death
 I move along the slanting oak and tar.
 Horatio, the icy lines, the shivered stays,**

the snapping sails and hooded waves
were like an invitation to the end. I clung
to chill rope rails, ambiguous; I felt
my will dividing in the night: the coward
leaping bravely headlong into brine,
the hero clutching desperately to hemp.
The doubleness of riven single man,
I froze in frantic open storm, and burned
like hell beneath my skin. Corrosive
questions flayed my head and heart. Here at sea,
in league with death in killing former friends
and tempting my split heart. Here at sea,
in mindless surge, two hundred miles from home
and my strong work, the work that must be done—
to kill the vicious King. The choice,
no choice, Horatio; I turn to find
death, and only death, becomes my world.
I walked, demented, walked through half
the night, til open weather lanced my flesh
and sleep fell on my bones. I woke
in curtained cabin, wrapped in Scottish wool
and all my sodden linen clothes. The storm
was past; the aftermath of violence
chuffing out its dying breath in swirling breeze
that challenged our straight course.
And then, the sudden change. A cry,
the sighting, and the shouting brawl
of strategem and rusty seamanship.
Off our starboard stern, and closing fast
at naughty angle in a racy speed,
a warlike pirate vessel, skull and crossbones
top the main: ram-beaked, full-rig galleon.
Bone in her teeth, and busting through the swells
she cut toward us like desire. We hauled, we reached,
we tacked to capture air—to no avail.
They had the freshets from the north before us;
they had the sailor's skill in perfect form.
They closed the choppy distance steadily,
every canvas taut, the sheets in trim,
the wind almost at their command,
and gave us deadly chase. Finding ourselves

too slow of sail, we manned the stations
 and put on a show of valor. In the moil
 of grappling irons and ruffled lines I boarded them.
 And then, as if by charm, they cut the lines,
 untonged the gaffs and dropped the Danes like lead.
 They knew exactly what they did; my garb
 and royal ordnance told them I was goods,
 and they stole me like a royal treasure-box.

Within the hour they got sail out of sight;
 the Danes drop down behind like dogs gone lame
 and limping off the hunt. Simply masterful,
 these lean and leather-hooded rascals of the sea!
 They sail, they seek, and then they seize the loot,
 and trade it on the chance for gold,
 for drink, for food or sex—name what need
 of body or of soul. Opportunists of the main,
 their fibrous bodies toughened by the sea,
 a look of canny animal about the eyes,
 they live by codes of need and chance.
 But when the booty's taken and the sails are set,
 then grog and roasted meat, and music to the skysails
 of flute and drum, harmonica and lute.
 This too the human life, Horatio, so much
 undreamt of in our philosophies of academe
 and court. Sea wolves, lean as rope, savvy as
 wild cats, they do just what they will. Breathless
 at their skills—at dice, with knives, at story,
 over rum or wine, remembering their histories—
 I strove to keep from seeming stunned. I felt
 a growth in some deep place, the first in years,
 since lectures by the master Grimm at Wittenburg.
 Unlikely place! Here the second day becalmed
 upon a bluegreen slate of endless sea
 with clever animals. But here it is, something new
 for me, men for whom the gap is very small
 between their passion and their purpose. What they will
 becomes the format and the practice of the day;
 for here necessity is arbiter, experience is lord.
 No structure here of politics, conspiracy, or force;
 beneath their scars a dauntless beauty breathes.

They spoke with me; more tender in their listening
 than looks would tell, they wanted me to know
 that harm was not their way. We lingered long
 with bread and drink. What else to do in calm
 that pasted us like foil on a printed sea,
 and hung the canvases from masts like linen
 draped indoors. No sound. Not the subtlest move
 of line or flag; uncanny stillness after storm.
 But sun! Sun like a golden wafer in the sky,
 warming and transmuting us to lizard life.
 Asprawl the bulkheads, stretched on decks, thwart the
 ladders and the lines, the pirates lingered deeply
 in the bliss of sleep, or rest, or quiet hum
 of talk. Leather vests came off; shirts were shed,
 that skin might feel the steeper touch of sun
 in May. All benign the sky, the vaporous air
 alive with humming light; benign our common
 phototropic angling to the truth of light.

I dared, Horatio, to feel a joy—
 undanish of me though it seem. It opened
 in this deep stasis like a bud: unbidden,
 many-petaled, gentle as the waxing moon
 that rose at dusk. No shame to say, I wept
 that evening by the rail (back turned that none might see)
 that grace should come to me across the wounds
 of poisoned hearing at the whisp'ring court
 passionate visitation by a father
 sinned against to Hell, my melancholia
 washed in nursing bile, love forced to die,
 my soft and silly mother sexed to shame
 by her own frailty for brother lust,
 the killer of the king, and kin, and time.
 Impossible that it should come to this,
 a smile in my body 'gainst the face
 of pain, disgust, and woe. The miracle.
 And miracles accrue to us: at dawn
 the next a cry from crow's nest: "Whales! See whales
 to starboard off the bow, and closing sure."
 The ship awake; all hands on deck, and there
 before us like a heavy roll of hills

and bluegrey valleys under fragile rose
 of just before the sun, the awesome whales.
 A gam of four-and-twenty, on they came
 these people of the depths, these mountain forms
 toward us, unafraid to scout the ship
 adrift, and on again they passed serene,
 majestic eyes like artists sizing us,
 (deep, forceful, steady eyes like Father's ghost!),
 their flukes like wet black sails intelligent
 in close formation, heads above the swells
 their swimming made. Their motions like a dream
 of fluid will, so sure, so strong, they rapt
 us all for minutes at the rail. Almost
 no sound—so tuned their power to the sea—
 they arced in steadfast circle round the ship,
 as though to draw us into magic charm,
 and woo us into awe. All hushed their work
 or words and gave them proper grace of eye,
 as six gonged slowly on topgallant bell.
 The lines and structures of the ship became
 a magic center to their wide round wake
 and gave gigantic order to the day:
 at last involved in the dance of space and time,
 experience made manifest to sight.

Large time, you mystery of duration blind,
 and static ecstasy! We walk, we breathe,
 but also enter reverie and dream.
 Time flows; and stops. It is a streaming thing
 that sends a whirlpool eddy dancing off
 to side, or swirling back, against the flow.
 We grow in vegetable body slow;
 in spirit quick as mercury on glass.
 In mind we move in spirit time. A pulse,
 or two, and worlds are formed that alter us
 for ever in our hearts. The change of heart
 is what we must act here in time, enact
 in others as we can. I'm coming home,
 Horatio, without my trying hard
 I'm coming home, however scarred or marked.
 Please tell Ophelia I will cancel woes

and make her laugh; Laertes tell I sinned,
 and am most truly grieved. The King is mine.
 I've written him apart, and will convey
 my special naked greetings to him soon
 as both feet walk on Danish soil. His rage,
 beneath the masks of rhetoric and grace,
 his lust for flesh and glory shall succeed
 in death. But make no preparation, none.
 I see a way where no way seems to be.
 Time suits all need; its whorls will write the scene.
 Negation makes a way for chance; it cuts
 the fabric of the tapestry, makes holes
 in time where spirit grows. Most opportune
 mischances grow from evil will, and ah!
 the hangman's noose is braided in our hands
 for us to use. The readiness is all.
 Pirates rescued me. Recall your Greek
peiráo, try, attempt. I learn to try
 the chance that opens doors. The whales a key
 experience that rolls its mass toward me.

And now the air is fresh, the clouds pile high,
 lines tense and cloth unfurls. We set the course
 for Danish pastures, home. In time we ride
 beneath the heady sky on rolling crests
 just barely breaking into lines of foam
 along the heavy mounded bluewhite sea
 before the wind. One hundred feet of waterline
 bravely making way!

Time comes in steady pulse
 these hours to me. Now gone the ragged limp
 and zany rush of days before I went
 away, so long ago, but three full nights
 at sea. The tidal change is in,
 heart's sorrow eased, clear life ensuing
 like this honest sunlight melting tar
 between warm boards beneath me where I sit.
 Such sickness as I had . . . may all forgive
 that selfish rashness has caused hurt and death.
 I study time, for it alone contains

the rest: all elements in motion, all
sound, creation, act, and space itself
contiguous. The amplitude of time.
Ocean moments wash throughout our days,
the fertile fields of special time, of grace
when shape comes over action, meaning over
circumstance. The best designs we have
are those made part by fortune and by chance,
for thought is not to man alone. There is
divinity that shapes our fates, rough cut
them as we may. Brave time wears shoddy cloaks,
and times we must be bold to take them off.
In harmony with time that works its will,
I now must act my passion; make it happen:
beyond this facile language waits the word.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Shakespeare's Fusion of the Arts

by J. L. Styan

My first premise is that Shakespeare was a Renaissance man, with all the magic connotations of that term, and that he was therefore familiar with all the arts. My second and perhaps more important premise is that his territory, the Elizabethan stage, was a Renaissance vehicle and equally magical, the pantechicon of its time. The poet, his play, and his stage are inseparable, and the Renaissance concept of the poet as maker embraces speech as well as words, song and dance as well as music, taking all the performing arts to a point where their edges are thoroughly blurred.

In practice, it is for us to recognize the form and shape of these arts of voice and body, ears and eyes, and to unblur their edges. More than this, the study of a play demands that we understand how they come together for the promotion of drama and performance. If a Shakespeare play works like no other ever written and performed, it should lead us directly to that other mystery, the nature of the Elizabethan theatre and stage itself. Its sheer emptiness—its “empty space”, to use the term with which Peter Brook enshrined it—places the emphasis on the embodiment of the arts in action, and on the processes of drama as a performing art.

The open stage has been said, with justice, to throw all the weight upon the actor and his power of speech and movement. If it is a bare stage, it also invites the participation of the audience, urging the laws of “Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts,” to quote the ironic plea for help spoken by the Chorus in *Henry V*. Above all, the empty space makes of drama a direct and sensory experience: when Lear curses his daughter Goneril on the line, “Infect her beauty, / You fen-suck'd fogs,” our thoughts are less likely to be on Tudor notions of infectious disease than on the actor's spittle flying through the air from all those f's and s's; when Macduff hears of the death of his wife and children, the lines teach the actor how to speak them, since one word, “all,” is repeated and repeated until we hear it as both a cry of anguish and a call for revenge:

All my pretty ones?
Did you say all?—O Hell-kite!—All?
What all my pretty chickens. . . ?

(*Macbeth*, IV. iii. 216-18)

Say this more softly and we hear groans, more loudly and we hear yells; but the noise itself is doing the work.

The emptiness of the Elizabethan stage, however, carries another, more elusive, quality, one which has to do with the nature of Elizabethan dramatic illusion. The thrust of the platform precipitates the actor into the arms of his audience, and the intimacy of the tight-knit auditorium compels him to sense it physically all around, below, and above him. In turn, although the stage does not necessarily represent anything in particular, it refuses to allow us to slip away into the simple ease of make-believe, but constantly insists that we remember we are in a theater, as Dr. Johnson believed we do, and Bertolt Brecht desired we should, and that we have a constructive contribution to make in the creation of the play. In summary, the non-illusory quality which enabled an Elizabethan poetic play to work at maximum force was that of a ritualistic spirit shared by all parties to the play.

This alert and conscious quality of imagination characteristic of a Shakespeare play allows the arts to come together in performance in the way they do. The same freedom that encouraged the language of the stage to leap from prose to verse and back again, that enabled the action to slip from the realistic to the unreal and symbolic with the speed of a dream (or a nightmare), prompted the playwright to exploit in many hybrid ways the arts of music and song, and dance and pantomime, within the magic web of the theater. This paper will stay with music, song, and dance in the plays, and the way they are used within the play may reveal a little of how poetic drama does its remarkable work.

"Music plays" is the recurring stage direction throughout quarto and folio, and for years the more literary reader took this as a cue to let his eye run on to the next line of print. But we know too well what power music can bring to a scene: how many gunfights in the western movies of old would simply lack excitement, if not actual firepower, without the constant help of a full orchestra out there on the range; and how many bad actors and actresses have not had their performances vastly enhanced at moments of great emotion by a friendly violin or two (some years ago there was a pretty English starlet named Patricia Roc who received great praise for an emotional performance of watching her lover's airplane flying off to war; closer inspection of the shot reveals that the camera showed only the back of her head; music had done it all).

So the rule for an Elizabethan play should be that whenever we read the stage direction, "Music plays," we should pay special attention, and at least determine what kind of music: a lute and strings proposing a love song will have a different effect from the drums and trumpets, hautboys

and sackbuts, of a royal procession. Yet in Shakespeare there are some 300 musical stage directions, and at least 32 of the plays refer to music, with over 500 passages in the text making direct reference to it. The implication is that the musicians belonging to a company or hired for the occasion were always on hand, and that every play may be assumed to employ music. Every boy actor was trained, we know, in singing, and every company clown was expected to sing also; perhaps all Elizabethan actors had vocal gifts. Is this alarming? We always knew that Shakespeare wrote musical comedies; it now seems he wrote musical tragedies and histories too. It is for us to check the places where singing merges with speech, and song and dance with drama.

The gulling of Benedick in *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. iii. offers a familiar instance of a Shakespearean song in action. As Benedick eavesdrops upon the Prince, Leonato, and Claudio (who, of course, know that he is listening), the trickery is begun appropriately with a love song, Balthasar's sweet and melancholy little ditty,

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever.

(62-63)

This exactly captures the sentimental mood by which Benedick's transformation from misogynist to lover is to be managed, not impossible in the case of such a *self-deceiver*. It could well be that Shakespeare is really touching on the theme of deception in the play as a whole, especially preparing us for Claudio's rejection of Hero. He is thereby wasting no opportunity to work upon the audience's sensibilities as well as Benedick's, and casting over his comedy a little of the darker shadow of what is to come.

Yet that is not all there is to arranging a song for a play. In performance (as we know from modern musicals), a song lends a new dimension to the art and craft of the performer, and in this instance Benedick is enabled to use the time and style of the singing to convey the ridiculous change in his outlook. His attitude in his earlier lines was one of complete cynicism:

I do much wonder that one man, seeing how much another man is a fool when he dedicates his behaviours to love, will, after he hath laughed at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his own scorn by falling in love: and such a man is Claudio. I have known when there was no music with him but the drum and the fife. . .

(7-14)

From this he passes to a certain grudging approval of the music he believes is being played to gratify Claudio's amorous desire:

Now, divine air! Now is his soul ravished! Is it not strange that
sheep's guts should hale souls out of men's bodies?

(58-60)

Benedick is by now showing two faces. What's more, a melancholy song has become a funny one. A student once asked me what was funny about the beautiful love song heard in *Twelfth Night*, "O mistress mine." Of course, it is not the song that is funny, but its context, sung as it is to Andrew Aguecheek, who is lost in the throes of love and liquor. There is a Yorkshire dialect word that suitably describes the stupid expression on his face, the word "gormless," and all Shakespeare has done is set a delightful song in brilliant counterpoint with a delicious performance of "gormlessness."

However, no two songs in the plays have quite the same effect. We are not dealing with songs *per se*, songs-sung, but with songs-functional, songs-in-action, songs-in-the-service-of-the-play. It is possible to list the many and varied jobs that music and song may do in drama, like creating the mood and atmosphere of a scene, enhancing our perception of a character, marking an entrance perhaps, or, as in opera, developing a moment of feeling and emotion, and so on, but the constantly varying context of drama in performance will always defy any simple conclusions about its use of song.

Bassanio's song sung during his casket scene in *The Merchant of Venice*, III ii, has another job to do, "the whilst Bassanio comments on the caskets to himself," as the Quarto stage direction has it. The action seems uncomplicated. Portia called for a song earlier:

Let music sound while he doth make his choice,
Then if he lose he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music.

(43-45)

Then she makes it clear that she would dearly like Bassanio to choose the right casket (that is, the lead casket, as by now we know), although she says she will not cheat, but hopes that love will find a way. Now we hear the song itself, with its tell-tale rhymes:

Tell me where is Fancy bred,
Or in the heart, or in the head?
How begot, how nourished?

(63-65)

Has Portia cheated? Granville-Barker does not think so, believing such a trick to be unworthy of her.¹ John Russell Brown doesn't think so either, since it would not only belittle the lovers, but also cheapen the theme of the play.² Yet "Fancy bred" . . . "in the head" . . . "nourished", and more, all inescapably rhyme with "lead," just as the verses in Morocco's casket showered him with "gold" and those in Arragon's were laced with silvery sibilants. One thing is clear, and that is that no audience can avoid the question, which has the effect of inviting us to join in a happy word-game, a kind of charade. More than this, the song also invites us to take Portia's position and share her problem. Even more than this, we are given another hint of her lighter, feminine side, since we are to be prepared for the play's ultimate game, chiefly characterized by the frivolous exchange of rings immediately following a deadly trial nearly involving murder, no less. The Shakespeare capable of the ironic twists of *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Love's Labor's Lost* was certainly capable of a twinkle in the eye in *The Merchant of Venice*. Thus a song, by its placing in the action, can help manipulate our feelings and expectations about a whole play.

There are about 90 songs in the plays, and one or two other examples may suggest their range of dramatic possibilities. Perhaps the most moving of all is Desdemona's so-called "willow" song in *Othello*, IV. iii. The first point to make is that this song appears to have been a popular song of the time. We know that Shakespeare did not hesitate to "borrow" a lyric or a tune when it served his play, and "It was a lover and his lass" from *As You Like It* and "O mistress mine" from *Twelfth Night* were probably pop-songs of the day set to music by Thomas Morley. The willow song was another of these:

The poor soul sat sighing, by a sycamore tree,
Sing all a green willow:
Her hand on her bosom, her head on her knee,
Sing willow, willow, willow. . . .

(40-43)

The sentiment and the mood of poor Barbary's song of unrequited love are exactly right for Desdemona's scene:

that song tonight
Will not go from my mind. . I have much to do,
But to go hang my head all on one side
And sing it like poor Barbary. . . .

(30-33)

Moreover, the fact that it was a well-known song suddenly changes our image of Desdemona back from Iago's portrait of a whore and Othello's monster of his imagination to the girl we admired in the beginning, the one who gave the Moor "a world of sighs" when she heard his story. We are indeed to perceive two images of Desdemona just before she dies, one through Othello's fevered brain and one through the sweet agency of song. The simple, lyrical image of her is supported by the fact that, where the original ballad was sung to a lute, Desdemona must sing it unaccompanied, and in the most natural fashion. She interrupts herself to give orders to Emilia ("Lay by these" at line 47 and "Prithee hie thee" at line 49) and she even forgets her lines ("Nay, that's not next" at line 51)—Shakespeare's charming touch of human nature. This song is to be so informal as to be an extension of the living character, and to the Elizabethan playgoer, Desdemona was to seem as familiar as a song heard in the streets.

At another extreme, how can criticism account for Pandarus' song in *Troilus and Cressida*, III. ii: "Love, love, nothing but love, still love, still more!"? This song to the ineffable Helen of Troy is also a love song, but a really smutty one. It appears to echo the sex act to the point of orgasm; I will not review the text. In its last line, "O ho, groans out for Ha, ha, ha!" it even introduces the ironic suggestion of venereal disease, so foreshadowing the epilogue to the play with which Pandarus completes the picture. There cannot have been many more sexually obscene songs than "Love, love, nothing but love" before the rock songs of our own day sung to the phallic guitar. Pandarus' song sits at the epicenter of its play, and at the very least debases the cause for which the Trojan War is being fought. It also neatly sums up musically the interacting elements of sex and war that the play surveys: "Wars and lechery. Nothing else holds fashion" (V. ii. 193-4), and Thersites executes a perfect pun when he reports that the legendary heroes of Greece and Troy "war / whore for a placket" (II. iii. 21).

A *Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the more musical plays in the canon. It enjoys several woodland songs like "Over hill, over dale" and "You spotted snakes with double tongue," which, as seems appropriate, are given to fairies. However, there is one song that is not, perversely not. When Bottom the weaver, wearing his ass's-head, decides to sing so that his friends "shall hear I am not afraid" (III. i. 118), what song was Shakespeare to choose? In keeping with everything else in the wood near Athens, he decided to give him one about woodland birds. But Bottom is no fairy.

The ousel cock, so black of hue,
 With orange-tawny bill,
 The throstle, with his note so true,
 The wren with little quill.

(120-3)

A pretty piece it is—until we hear it sung in Bottom's coarse voice, which may be presumed to be quite wrong to render delicate lines about bird-songs. Of course, there is another principle at work, one of ironic comedy, for Bottom's voice must also awaken Titania, who responds with all the enthusiasm that a drop of purple juice in the eye can bring:

What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?

(124)

As befits the Queen of the Fairies, Titania manages a perfect iambic pentameter. So Shakespeare marks the incongruity between his gross and earthy mechanical and his fragile Fairy Queen by the ridiculous contrast between their two voices.

The Tempest has more songs than any other play of Shakespeare's, and the spirit of the comic action seems to be marked at key points by the style of the singing. Some of the most lovely songs in the language belong to Ariel and express his special qualities of compassion: "Come unto these yellow sands" (I. ii. 377) seems to allay the storm, and "Full fathom five thy father lies" (I. ii. 399) comforts Ferdinand who thinks his father has drowned. Moreover, *The Tempest* may be identified by two kinds and styles of song, not only Ariel's, but also Stephano's, the clown who sings sea-shanties and catches like "I shall no more to sea, to sea" (II. ii. 43) and

The master, the swabber, the boatswain, and I,
 The gunner and his mate,
 Lov'd Mall, Meg, and Marian, and Margery,
 But none of us car'd for Kate. . . .

(II. ii. 47-50)

In a similar way an audience is guided gymnastically through *Twelfth Night* by the three sorts of song associated with Orsino, Sir Toby, and Feste.

The numerous occasions when Shakespeare uses instrumental music in his plays indicate further ways by which he enhances his scenes and reveals his sense of theatre. In an Elizabethan performance it

would have been impossible for his audience not in some degree to have been aware of the musical side of his dramatic talent. At every level of society in sixteenth-century England there was a common experience of musical entertainment, and whether in court or tavern, music was a rich part of daily life. It might therefore be a fair guess that any striking musical reference or instance in the playhouse, whether touching the music of the spheres or merely cueing a trumpet-blast, would guide the audience towards a contributing perception.

The controlling power of music is used at many a moment of heightened emotion. In *Much Ado about Nothing*, V. iii., when Claudio comes to grieve for his dead Hero at “the monument of Leonato,” we should not be surprised to find “Balthasar and musicians” trailing behind him, ready to answer the clear injunction with some form of religious music,

Now, music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn. (11)

Balthasar then sings “Pardon, goddess of the night” in the manner the song calls for, “heavily, heavily,” all in careful preparation for the moving disclosure of “another Hero” (V. iv. 62). That, too, by a kind of counterpoint, is a preparatory cue for the big change to come, and the last line in the play is Benedick’s “Strike up, pipers!” as he calls for the dance which ends it on a joyful note of universal reconciliation.

This use of music is not there, of course, to support a character in the story, although the actor may react to it; like everything else in the play, in the last analysis it is there to manipulate the audience. During the beautiful scene in which Cordelia awakens her father from his madness in *King Lear*, IV. vii., Shakespeare ensures Lear’s transfiguration, and our belief in it, by paying great attention to external detail. He gives the King a change of costume (“in the heaviness of sleep / We put fresh garments on him,” 21-22). He seems to change the (imaginary) lighting also, for after the darkness of the storm scenes, Lear is conscious of “fair daylight,” in line 52. And the poetry Lear is given to speak is reduced to simple monosyllables. Then, to crown the whole effect and complete the treatment, the Doctor calls for music with “louder the music there” (line 25). Even if we are not sure what kind of music is wanted to cure a king’s madness and provide “the best comforter / To an unsettled fancy,” as Prospero calls it in *The Tempest*, V. i. 58-9, for the moment Lear’s music makes us into doctors, just as Cordelia’s kiss makes us daughters. Finally, when the old man wakes to new sanity, the same music magically makes King Lear of us all.

The supreme example of musically therapeutic witchcraft is heard at the end of *The Winter's Tale*, V. iii., when Paulina brings to life the statue of Hermione with the help of music:

Music, awake her; strike!
 'Tis time; descend; be stone no more; approach;
 Strike all that look upon with marvel. Come!

(98-100)

This is a little like the awakening of Pericles's queen Thaisa when she lies in her coffin in *Pericles*, III. ii.:

The still and woeful music that we have,
 Cause it to sound, beseech you.
 The viol once more; now thou stirr'st, thou block!
 The music there!

(89-92)

As Paulina says, everyone's faith is wanted at moments when the dead are to come to life. Frequent playgoers, like frequent flyers, will know that when the music strikes up, all will be well.

Not all of Shakespeare's music is designed to cast a spell and put us into a trance; some of it wakes us up. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, IV. i., Theseus' "winding of horns" certainly wakes up the lovers after their long night's contest in the wood:

Go, bid the huntsmen wake them with their horns.
 Good-morrow, friends. Saint Valentine is past.

(137-8)

Accordingly, the Folio has "*Wind horns. Shout within: they all start up.*" Nevertheless, these same horns also have the important effect of waking the audience itself from its dream in the imaginary moonlight, for we have to be alert and ready for the comic ironies of the last act. So Theseus' horns are slightly sarcastic horns, akin to the alarums heard at the beginning of *Troilus and Cressida* when they blow raspberries at the lovesick Troilus:

Peace, you ungracious clamours! Peace, rude sounds!
 Fools on both sides, Helen must needs be fair
 When with your blood you daily paint her thus.
 I cannot fight upon this argument;
 It is too starv'd a subject for my sword.

(I. i. 89-93)

This protest by Troilus is answered by another blast on the trumpets.

Shakespeare's musical imagination is working to manipulate our attention when a deliberately discordant note is struck, the elements of the drama seeming to be in a state of fission rather than fusion. On the night before the battle in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the fearful stage direction in the Folio at IV. iii. 11 reads, "music of the hautboys is under the stage," and the hautboys in *Macbeth* that accompany the ominous "show of eight kings" at IV. i. 106 are hardly intended to put us to sleep.

In some of the comedies, another sort of counterpoint is practiced. In *The Merchant of Venice*, the mercenary world of Venice is set at odds with the sweet music of Belmont. In *As You Like It*, the contentious world of the court is balanced against the singing heard in the Forest of Arden. In *Twelfth Night*, the sensuous palaces of Illyria are undercut by the drinking songs associated with Sir Toby in the so-called "kitchen scene," with Feste the clown subversively passing freely between all parties.

Twelfth Night opens with "Orsino" music, but "the food of love" is evidently rather sickly, to be surfeited, if not actually thrown up. The same music is heard again in II. iv.:

That piece of song,
That old and antic song we heard last night;
Methought it did relieve my passion much,
More than light airs and recollected terms
Of these most brisk and giddy-paced times.
Come, but one verse.

(2-6)

So the tune is played again, and before we are allowed to know its melancholy words, we are told more about it:

Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain;
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones
Do use to chant it . . .

(43-6)

Our wonder at such strange properties prepares us finally to receive its alarming ideas:

Come away, come away death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
Fie away, fie away breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.

(51-4)

This was the very song I was required to read as a schoolboy of fourteen from Palgrave's famous anthology of 1861, *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, always known as *Palgrave's Treasury*. But, Palgrave mistook the comic intention of "Come away death" for that of a pathetic love song.

Comments from the characters strongly suggest that it is comedy. When the music is heard again in this scene, the Duke again feels "the sweet pangs" of love, and the same tune teases Viola almost into revealing her secret feelings. Shakespeare concludes it with a somewhat sarcastic joke:

There's for thy pains.
No pains, sir, I take pleasure in singing, sir.

(67-8)

Feste adds a mocking little prayer on leaving:

Now the melancholy good protect thee, and the tailor make thy
doublet of changeable taffeta, for thy mind is a very opal.

(73-5)

The song itself is as sickly-sentimental a love song as Shakespeare could invent, "Come away death" being roughly translated to mean, "Hurry up and bury me." In *Shakespeare's Use of Song* (1923), Richmond Noble sensed its "humourously playful pity for the Duke's sad love-grief" (p. 83), but we also hear ironic laughter of the kind heard in *Hamlet* and *Troilus and Cressida* and other plays seen at the Globe in about 1600. Shakespeare's musical intention is to have us firmly reject the Duke's kind of loving.

Ironic counterpoint is a constant element present in Shakespeare's dialogue and action, and it should not surprise us to find it in the music too. One of the best examples occurs during Capulet's ball in *Romeo and Juliet*, I. v. The music he calls for to start the dancing at his party echoes his good-humored welcome to his guests:

Welcome, gentlemen, ladies that have their toes
Unplagued with corns will walk a bout with you.

(16-17)

Not a very good joke, but it suits old Capulet, and its intention is clear enough. His call goes out for what must be a lively tune:

A hall, a hall, give room! And foot it, girls!

(26)

It is possible, therefore, to make a good guess at the sort of dancing wanted—hardly a stately pavan. I'd suggest a courante or a galliard. "The nimble galliard," as the Ambassador of France calls it in *Henry V*, I. ii. 252, would meet the occasion, "a gallant dance," according to Sir John Davies in his poem "Orchestra,"

With lofty turns and caprioles in the air,
Which with the lusty tunes accordeth fair.

(stanza 68)

The galliard was a joyful affair in which the lady dances away and the man leaps after her, and it was one of the most popular dances of the sixteenth century. Yet in the midst of all this gaiety we hear Tybalt's threat to kill Romeo, foreshadowing the tragedy to come. Unlike Franco Zeffirelli's film version of 1968, in which the syrupy music seems to accompany the action of the ballroom scene, Shakespeare's music works against the force of the dialogue, and has the extraordinary power of making the ominous threat to the lovers seem more painful.

We are but a step away from the dance as yet another art form making its contribution to Elizabethan drama. A performance customarily ended with a dance, although this was not always mentioned in the text (as it is in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado about Nothing*). In Shakespeare, dances turn up in different places in all kinds of plays, and with increasing frequency towards the end of his career. He was by then one of the King's Men, and King James was especially fond of dancing.

The Elizabethan stage also had a wide range of dances to choose from: coarser, country dances like the roundel, the hay, and the jig were balanced by more courtly dances like the pavan, the measure, the canary, and the cinquepace, or "sink-a-pace" as Sir Toby Belch calls it. Some court dances could also be very vigorous, like the lavolta in which the man lifts the lady with his knee. Moreover, audiences were familiar with the differences, as is implied by Beatrice in *Much Ado* when she offers advice about marriage to her cousin Hero:

Hear me, Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure, and a cinque-pace: the first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig, and full as fantastical; the wedding mannerly-modest as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes repentance and, with his bad legs, falls into the cinque-pace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave.

(II. i. 66-73)

In that folk dancing and courtly dancing were performed on the same stage, the playhouse was one of the rare places in sixteenth-century London that must have seemed classless. For the play, however, mixed dancing served to distinguish one group of characters from another, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: if Theseus and Hippolyta dance a stately pavan, Titania and Oberon and their fairies may enjoy a round or a ring-dance; if the lovers dance a coranto, the running courtship dance, we know that the mechanicals settled for a rustic bergomask, possibly to the sound of Bottom's favorite music, the tongs and the bones. Thus the audience's sense of the dance could help it to leap the imaginative levels in the play.

One would expect Shakespeare to integrate his dances, like his songs, into the action of his play, and here are a few of their uses in performance. *Love's Labor's Lost* will be remembered for its masked ball at V. ii. 157, where we read, "*Enter Blackmores with music; . . . and the rest of the Lords disguised.*" The four noble lovers approach their ladies with a mask of Muscovites, and all the signs are that their dance is to be solemn and pompous. Thus speaks the King of Navarre, referring to the Princess of France:

Say to her, we have measur'd many miles
To tread a measure with her on this grass.

(184-5)

"Measure" was synonymous with "pavan," which was the most formal of processional dances, its name deriving from "pavo," peacock. Edward Naylor, that tireless student of Shakespeare's music, reported that the dance had reference to the peacock's majestic strut and gay feathers, and went on to say,

It was *de rigueur* for gentlemen to dance the pavan in cap and sword; for lawyers to wear their gowns, princes their mantles; and ladies to take part in the fullest of full dress, the long trains of their gowns being supposed to correspond in appearance and movement to the peacock's tail.³

The Muscovites are soon recognized as our four inept lovers in disguise, and each must strut back and forth before his disdainful lady, as she "refuses" to dance with him. Conveniently, each couple remains downstage on the Elizabethan platform until the progression requires that it makes room for the next pair (a trick of stagecraft that Shakespeare was to use again in the elegant pavan danced by the four couples seen in the masked ball of *Much Ado about Nothing*, II. i. 79.) Finally Navarre's men

salute the ladies with a bow:

King. Farewell, mad wenches: you have simple wits.

Princess. Twenty adieus, my frozen Muscovites.

(264-5)

I like that “frozen Muscovites:” even if they didn’t have snow on their boots, the dance would certainly have come across as a little frigid.

In *All’s Well That Ends Well*, the mysterious fistula from which the King of France is dying is finally cured with a coranto (II. iii). Indeed, after Tyrone Guthrie’s renowned productions of 1953 and 1959 in Canada and England, the scene actually came to be known as “the ballroom scene.” It begins with a key speech from Lafew: “They say miracles are past!” The news is out that Helena, the girl from out-of-town, has cured the King, and he has been transformed. “Lustique” is Lafew’s word for him. But how will Shakespeare muster the forces of the stage to project the change in him? The world is told, “Why, he’s able to lead her a coranto” (43). A coranto, no less! And to prove his miraculous recovery, the old king dances in with his youthful preserver on his arm, executing one of the most vigorous dances in the repertoire. The coranto was a lively country dance that was later adapted for the court, and to dance it a couple sprang from left to right, running and jumping in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. If you saw the BBC-TV production of *All’s Well*, you had a glimpse of Donald Sinden prancing along with Angela Down at his side; for the Edwardian period chosen by Guthrie for his production, Alec Guinness and Irene Worth in Canada whirled on stage to a fast, old-fashioned Viennese waltz.

The Witches in *Macbeth* surely open their play with a dance:

When shall we three meet again?

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

(I. i. 1-2)

The idea that they sit cozily round their cauldron is belied by the insistent rhymes and rhythms of their tetrameters and quatrains. But there is also a good theatrical reason why the Witches do a dance. With the trap in the platform at centerstage, their dance would be performed in the round, so that the pattern of their movement would itself cast a spell, not only by marking out a circle into which the haunted characters of the play would step later on, but also by involving the whole audience in a widening circle: those who are to share the witchcraft of the play will become its haunted spectators.

Every dance seems to have its proper function in the plays. In *Timon*

of Athens, the vanity of Timon's degenerate house is signalled by "a masque of ladies" performing as "Amazons, with lutes in their hands, dancing and playing" (I. ii. 126). Timon was entertaining his guests, and Shakespeare was no doubt entertaining his audience, even if we cannot today imagine what a masque of Amazons looked like. Nevertheless, the play's choric commentator, the "churlish philosopher" Apemantus, also hints at what is to come:

I should fear those that dance before me now
Would one day stamp upon me.

(139-40)

Unlike Ben Jonson, Shakespeare wrote no masques, although his most musical play, *The Tempest*, seems to be made up of visionary, masque-like units. These episodes both sing and dance to us, as do the goddesses, nymphs, and reapers of the fourth act. (Here they probably danced the French "brantle," anglicized as "brawl," a term describing different kinds of ring dances in which everyone linked arms and moved sideways in circles.) The idea that this play is a kind of masque in itself is not new, and goes back to scholars like A.H. Thorndike in *Shakespeare's Theater* in 1916 and Enid Welsford in *The Court Masque* in 1927; it supports our sense of the extraordinary capability of the Elizabethan stage to exploit the sister arts. The dance of shepherds and shepherdesses during the sheep-shearing feast, which helps to change the mood of *The Winter's Tale* at IV. iv. 167, would have been an immediately recognizable country dance, perhaps a "hay" with its winding pattern of steps, for we remember Florizel's refreshing description of Perdita's dancing:

When you do dance, I wish you
A wave o' th' sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that . . .

(140-2)

Nevertheless, why would Shakespeare have introduced into his great Whitsun pastoral scene "a dance of twelve satyrs" (343)? What exactly were twelve hopping, jumping, hairy men doing in this play—unless merely gratifying the wenches with "a gallimaufry of gambols" (329)?

This review of the arts of music and dance in Shakespeare could be pursued a stage further into something more speculative. Just as there are countless places where his verse speech merged smoothly with song and incantation, both for tragic heroes like Romeo ("O my love, my wife. / Death that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath. . .," *Romeo and Juliet*, V. iii. 91-2) and for comic heroines like Viola ("Make me a willow

cabin at your gate, / And call upon my soul within the house. . .” *Twelfth Night*, I v. 272-3), so there are many where the nature of the gesture and movement implicit in Shakespeare’s verse comes close to dance. We are talking now about what may be called Shakespeare’s unique “choreography.” In a theatre of non-illusion, where the controlling limitations of realism in speech and behavior did not obtain, we cannot be sure that dance was not also a characteristic of the artificial style of movement that belonged to the Elizabethan stage.

One or two well-known examples may encourage speculation. Everyone admires the first words shared by Romeo and Juliet at Capulet’s ball, because they form a delightful sonnet:

If I profane with my unworhiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this:
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. / . . .
(*Romeo and Juliet*, I v. 92-5)

As poetry this sonnet not only manages to sanctify their meeting, but it also contrives to carry implicit stage directions for kissing hands and lips: images of holy and profane love merge in one deft exchange. Yet all the while music is being played for a courtship dance like the galliard, so that the pretty sonnet may also be a cue for a flirtatious dance by the lovers, their bodies swaying forwards and backwards with the music and the verse, a gallant advance by Romeo succeeded by a coy retreat by Juliet.

If dancing to a sonnet is unacceptable, what about the intricate mixing of poetry and movement in the scene of “choosing a husband” danced in *All’s Well*, II. iii? Helena has cured the King of France, who now invites her to choose the man she wants to marry from among the eligible officers and courtiers present. There is no specific direction for her to dance with all the men, but it is evident from the pattern and rhythm of the verse that she dances with four of them, so that some form of choreography is called for.

Helena. Now, Diane, from thy altar do I fly,
And to imperial Love, that god most high
Do my sighs stream. [To First Lord] Sir, will you
hear my suit?
First Lord. And grant it
Helena. Thanks, sir, all the rest is mute.

(74-77)

Helena dances a foot or two with each man and passes to the next, rejecting each one. A delighted audience sees Bertram's turn getting nearer and nearer, until there is only him left, and it is he whom she leads in astonishment to the King:

Helena. This is the man.

King. Why, then, young Bertram, take her; she's thy wife.

(104-5)

In the Guthrie productions the orchestra stopped and a deathly silence fell upon the assembled company. Reality returned with a rush, and Helena's fantasizing came to an abrupt end. Bertram turned away in disgust: what did he want with this person whose only virtue was that she knew how to cure a fistula? Performance completely justified the use of dance, and for the first time Guthrie was able to show that in this play Shakespeare fully intended a dramatic use for his rhyming couplets; he used rhyme, not because he didn't know any better, but in order to control his audience's perception of the action and its mood.

One more puzzle. What did the Lord Chamberlain's Men at the Globe do with the gathering of unhappy lovers in *As You Like It*, V. ii.? Here is a sample of their lines:

Phebe. Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

Silvius. It is to be all made of sighs and tears,

And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe. And I for Ganymede.

Orlando. And I for Rosalind.

Rosalind. And I for no woman.

(82-89)

This pattern is repeated four times. I have heard these lines spoken with the actors sitting forlornly around an oak tree, but they cry out for some kind of round dance. This is a play in which different kinds of amorous behavior are wildly juxtaposed in order to illuminate one another. It seems eminently appropriate that its spirit of fantasy and burlesque should be capped at the end by a song and a dance that draws on all the performing arts. When the climax of the comedy arrives and everyone is at sixes and sevens, an amusing little square-dance serves to mock the confusion of the four unhappy lovers.

Music and dance traditionally suggest the possibilities of harmony and reconciliation implicit in comedy, just as Ariel's music pacifies the storm in *The Tempest*; but harmony need not always be the intention. In *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby's drunken singing serves to touch off mayhem in an orderly household. And in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the fairies

hardly conduct their moonlight revels peacefully. In *Shakespeare and the Dance* (1981), Alan Brissenden points out that although dancing was one of the chief occupations of Elizabethan fairies, they were creatures who rarely walked if they could get from one place to another by hopping and skipping, tripping and gambolling, in “paroxysms of antic corybantic jollity”.⁴

In his famous theory of music-drama and the “total art-work,” Wagner argued in *The Art-Work of the Future* (1849) that Beethoven had taken music to the point where speech should follow, and that Shakespeare had taken poetry to the point where music should follow. It would not be unfair to say that Shakespeare may have had his own ideas all along about a total art-work for the stage, one which mixed the arts in a very digestible dramatic pie.

Northwestern University

Notes

¹*Prefaces to Shakespeare, Second Series* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930), p. 74 note.

²The text used in the paper is the Arden Edition (London: Methuen, 1955), p. 80.

³*Shakespeare and Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1931), pp. 129-30.

⁴*Shakespeare and the Dance* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities, 1981), p. 142.

**“Meaner Parties”:
Spousal Conventions and Oral Culture
in *Measure for Measure* and
All’s Well That Ends Well
by Alan W. Powers**

For the Elizabethan populace who could not read and write, the unwritten culture of the period instituted forms of spectacle, marriage and adjudication: play-going, spousals and church courts. By examining the ecclesiastical court system of the day, especially laws for oral gestures such as spousals and defamation, we can see the intimate relation of certain plays to the spoken word. Both *Measure for Measure* and *All’s Well That Ends Well* deal with social problems and women’s roles peculiar to reformation England, namely, the oral and private marriage contracts which led to so many cases in the ecclesiastical courts and which provoked at least four of the Anglican Canons of 1604.¹ Several other plays include examples of often unwitnessed spousals, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Winter’s Tale*, *Cymbeline*, and even *Merchant of Venice*. Most of the spousals in Shakespeare’s plays were first performed during Elizabeth’s reign, in the comedies perhaps because of a less lenient attitude under James toward the representation of popular forms on the borders of church jurisdiction. No doubt Cloten correctly distinguished between spousals and church marriage when he emphasized the class distinction, “And though it be allowed in meaner parties. . .to knit their souls / (On whom there is no more dependency / But brats and beggary) in self-figur’d knot, / Yet you [Imogen] are curb’d from that enlargement by / The consequence o’ th’ crown” (*Cym.* II. iii. 113).² Of course, Cloten’s callous and contemptuous tone here suggests why in the very first scene the First Gentleman calls him “a thing / Too bad for bad report” (I. i. 16). Shakespeare places the sneering aristocrat’s analysis of marriage forms in the mouth of an unsympathetic character, to say the least; still, Cloten’s assessment is substantially true. Spousals, for instance, do not suit the dignity of tragedy, nor the respectability of the Scot, James I; yet, curiously, church weddings remain offstage—though we see a truncated version in *Much Ado*, an anti-marriage where all the questions are answered negatively. Onstage the popular marriage form, usually in “real life” reserved for “meaner parties,” sees use more broadly as a dramatic convention, a stage representation of the sacred rite

offstage.

Shakespeare's reluctance to represent any marriage but spousals on stage probably proceeds from religious scruple, from avoiding profanation, if not outright censorship. Also, spousals symbolize individual consent, the aspect of a marriage ceremony most inherently dramatic, most revelatory of character. Spousals also privilege the spoken, as Shakespeare does in other ways such as writing for performance—in phrase and in fact—as well as by giving dramatic weight to oaths and oral contracts. Although in the Shakespeare canon oaths are made to be broken, oral marriage contracts are made to be enforced: not as in Elizabethan life, by instance suits before ecclesiastical judges like Henry Swinburne of York Minster, but by the civil authority, Duke Vincentio or the King of France, and by the resolve of a woman like Isabella, Helena, or Imogen.

In his *Treatise of Spousals or Matrimonial Contracts*, Judge Swinburne (1560?-1623) distinguishes between spousals *de futuro*, or what we call “engagement,” and spousals *de praesenti*, a marriage in fact. As an example of the latter oral contract, Swinburne cites:

I take thee for my Wife, desiring if thou accept me for thy
Husband, to receive this Ring, or to pledge me in a Cup of
Wine.³

Even when there were witnesses, they could not usually attest to the most important point of law, whether the vows used present or future tense, whether they promised marriage or enacted it. This legal question was complicated by the English lexicographical identity between words of volition and consent, “I will,” and words in the future tense, “I will.” In many areas of England, the *de praesenti*, usual marriage form used “I will” to imply present fact, as in “Wilt thou, John, have this woman, Rachel, to be thy wife?”⁴ Clearly, such confusions about the legal force of oral statements, such widespread use of private spousals, as well as the class and geographical distinctions between spousals and church marriage, inform the problem plays in particular.

Over thirty years after the Council of Trent invented modern marriage by insisting on the presence of a priest, the Anglicans attempted to gain control over popular marriage customs with their Canons of 1604, enacted after a year of debate. While Shakespeare was writing *Measure for Measure*, his second play about clandestine marriage, once again involving a Juliet, the synods were debating legislation that would, they hoped, discourage forever the vulgar style of marriages in the form of spousals.⁵ Such oral contracts without parental consent, without ecclesi-

astical witness and benediction, and banns posted on three successive Sundays or feast days, nevertheless were marriages, if both parties said they were—barring “diriment exclusions” such as vows or consanguinity or prior spousals.

The spousals in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* fairly exhaust the signs of marriage mentioned by Swinburne: Proteus and Julia exchange rings, then kiss, and—lest there be any doubt about the contract—Proteus adds, “Here is my hand for my true constancy” (TGV, II ii. 8). The handshake was a prevalent and appropriate sign of marriage.⁶ The only sign of marriage that Swinburne mentions and Julia and Proteus forbear is pledging “in a Cup of Wine.”

Julia. Keep this remembrance for thy Julia's sake.

[Giving a ring]

Proteus. Why then we'll make exchange; here, take you this.

Julia. And seal the bargain with a holy kiss.

Proteus. Here is my hand for my true constancy;
And when that hour o'erslips me in the day
Wherein I sigh not, Julia, for thy sake,
The next ensuing hour some foul mischance
Torment me for my love's forgetfulness!
My father stays my coming; answer not;
The tide is now—nay, not thy tide of tears
That tide will stay me longer than I should.
Julia, farewell!

[Exit Julia]

What, gone without a word?

Ay, so true love should do: it cannot speak,
For truth hath better deeds than words to grace it

(II ii. 5-18)

The audience here are witnesses; we overhear the vows about which ecclesiastical judges like Swinburne would require testimony. These spousals (in what tense?) are important in the play, for they establish that Proteus's betrayal of Julia is as great as his betrayal of Valentine. Are Proteus and Julia married under Anglican canon law?

Before answering this question, let us look at a clear example of Shakespearean live-togethers, Claudio and Julietta. *Measure for Measure* concerns hypocrisy in the enforcement of exactly the kind of laws Swinburne adjudicated. If this play includes a range of bawdy characters and issues, from Pompey Bum and Mistress Overdone to Elizabethan prostitution laws, the initial situation belongs in what the Elizabethans called a “bawdy court.” The historian Ralph Houlbrooke explains:

No part of the work of the church courts affected so intimately the lives of the ordinary people as did their regulation of relations between the sexes. The courts' activity in this sphere bulked indeed so large in the popular imagination that it made them known as "bawdy courts". . . a rich mine for the connoisseur of coarse stories, but there was in the testimony heard by the court ample material for poignant tragedy as well as low farce.⁷

In England, most of the matrimonial cases that came before such courts were "brought to the notice of consistory court judges in instance suits (by the parties), but they could also be dealt with upon presentment. Thus we find individuals prosecuted for failing to have matrimonial contracts solemnized. . . ."⁸ In *Measure for Measure*, Claudio is arrested "upon presentment," by representatives of society, in particular, Angelo's vice squad. Although arrest by presentment only occasionally happened in English cases, it was the usual mode in France—perhaps also in Cinthio's Italy.⁹

The play begins with a change in administration, a change that promises law and order. The kindly but lax Duke Vincentio deposes to the rigorous Angelo his rule over Vienna. Angelo immediately enforces old morals statutes; in the play's second scene the bawd Mistress Overdone informs us that one Claudio, "worth five thousand of you all [Lucio and two gentlemen clients]," will lose his head in three days for getting Madam Julietta with child. The culprit enters after an exchange about Angelo's edict abolishing houses of prostitution in the "suburbs" (such as, in London, South Bank), a passage which tends to mitigate Claudio's offense. Claudio's own version will sound familiar to those who have heard about Proteus and Julia. Claudio implies that although others may term it that deadly sin "lechery" (I. ii. 139), he has entered what now is called "a meaningful relationship" with Julietta, or what he calls by the same phrase Florizel does (*WT*, II. iv. 390), "upon a true contract / I got possession of Julietta's bed." Most editors gloss "true contract" in such a way that average readers may never realize that Claudio and Julietta have clearly been living together. Editor Evans of *The Riverside Shakespeare* (1974) glosses it, "Claudio and Julietta have declared themselves husband and wife in the presence of witnesses."¹⁰ In fact, there probably were no witnesses—none come forward at his trial—although there may have been family members as in Florizel and Perdita's interrupted spousals in *The Winter's Tale* (IV. iv. 380ff).

Claudio's case, like Proteus's (above) and Helen's (below), is exactly the sort that came before the canon courts or "bawdy courts."

Thus stands it with me: upon a true contract
 I got possession of Julietta's bed.
 You know the lady; she is fast my wife,
 Save that we do the denunciation lack
 Of outward order. This we came not to,
 Only for the propagation of a dow'r
 Remaining in the coffers of her friends,
 From whom we thought it meet to hide our love
 Till time had made them for us.

(i. ii. 145-153)

In short, they did not publicly marry for financial and family reasons. How many modern POSSLQ's (to use the I.R.S. acronym for Persons of Opposite Sex Sharing Living Quarters) would say exactly the same thing?¹¹ What does Claudio mean when he says "she is fast my wife, / Save that we do the denunciation lack of outward order?" He is referring to the customary form of marriage in Europe up until the Council of Trent, which finally added the requirement of a priest's presence. In England prior to the Canons of 1604, a prevalent form of marriage among non-propertied and rural people (Cloten's "meaner parties") was the spousal (Cloten's "self-figur'd knot"). Under canon law, a simple sentence constituted marriage, if both parties said that they were married to each other; difficulties only arose, and witnesses became necessary, when one of the parties denied such a marriage existed—for instance, by saying that the verb used was future tense.

What, for instance, was the tense of Proteus and Julia's spousal? Proteus swears, with a spousal handshake, that he will be faithful to Julia, "Here is my hand for my true constancy." He does not say, as does another Claudio in the last scene of *Much Ado*, "I am your husband if you like of me" (V. iv. 59). Nor does Julia claim she is his wife; therefore, Judge Swinburne would have judged their spousals *de futuro*. Nevertheless, such an oral engagement had a definite legal force under canon law: spousals *de futuro* were legally enforced. The first such spousal took precedence, and barred any other engagement or marriage. The scene at the end of *Much Ado About Nothing* raises very interesting questions of verb tense. In recompense for his false charges that killed—as he believes, "the former Hero"—Claudio agrees not to a blind date, but a blind marriage. The form it takes, after the earlier debacle of a church nuptial, is a spousal:

Claudius. Why then she's mine. Sweet, let me see your face.
Leonato. No, that you shall not till you take her hand,
 Before this friar, and swear to marry her.

Claudius. Give me your hand before this holy friar—
I am your husband if you like of me.

(V. iv. 55-59)

Now, is this *de futuro* or *de praesenti*? All the ambiguities of oral contracts enter in here. Leonato seems to ask for an engagement, “swear that you will marry her,” but he could be asking that Claudio take an oath of marriage, that he swear in order to marry, that he swear with the result of marriage. In Latin, “swear to marry” would be an *ut* clause of purpose (or intention) or of result. There would be a similar ambiguity, except distinctions in a wider variety of tenses showing result. If, as seems probable, Leonato simply asks for a blind engagement, a promise to marry, Claudio goes him one better, for he answers in the present tense, “I am your husband.” Of course, he adds an “if,” and, as Touchstone has taught us, there is “much virtue in If” (AYLI, V. iv. 103). On the other hand, “I am” could be a present tense spousal with a confusing future tense implication, that is, an archaic future definite: “I will be for sure. . .,” as in the distinction we still make between “I shall” and “I will.” The Friar’s presence also contributes, along with the apparent present tense, to the appearance of a nuptial, or at least a spousal *de praesenti*.

Presumably, Claudio and Julietta’s “true contract” was unwitnessed, else the witnesses would have come forward to influence Angelo’s court. What editor Evans insists, that a true contract required witnesses, is true were it to be contested in court; but in fact, the court records are filled with unwitnessed spousals.

But all too frequently informal or inadequately witnessed contracts took place in shops, fairs, backyards and fields, and these formed a large proportion of the ones that were disputed in the courts.¹²

Of the spousals we discuss, only those in *The Winter’s Tale* are witnessed, in fact, by the most proper authorities, the fathers; that variety of spousal, though set in the pastoral world, with half the parties in disguise, is a close approximation to a form of *de praesenti* marriage in common use through 1570.

Depositions show that contracts often took place in the presence of parents and friends of the parties, perhaps at a meal given to provide a suitable opportunity.¹³

Shakespeare himself and Anne may have—and Claudio and Julietta definitely had—lived together as if married without witnesses.¹⁴

Such couples were subject to fornication suits such as Claudio suffers, but they also had some recourse to countersuit for defamation. Thus were the two largest classification of ecclesiastical suits by lay people related. In Judge Swinburne's court at York, if both parties acknowledged the contract, it was a marriage in fact, barring the diriment exclusions of prior contract, consanguinity, or pending suit in canon court. Again, Ralph Houlbrooke explains.

A number of offenders had already "made themselves sure" to one another in an informal manner or were prepared to consider marriages. The courts treated their cases in different ways at different times. Early in the period [1520-1550] people were frequently punished for antenuptial fornication at Winchester, while in the 1560s the commissary in Norwich archdeaconry often dismissed couples who got married.¹⁵

The punishment for the ante-nuptial fornication of which Angelo accuses Claudio was public penance, not death—though Shakespeare may have heard reports such as Mandieta's about the Mayans, where fornication was so punished.¹⁶ Public penance, usually involving public humiliation, was almost a popular art form in the Renaissance, with the community often resorting to extra-legal solutions such as "rough music" ("skimmingtons" or "charivari"), the virtual parade of neighbors' mockery.¹⁷ Clearly, Angelo's sentence does not fit the infraction; nor was there, from what we have seen so far, a substantial infraction. Many of the marriage contracts among the common people of Elizabethan England, especially in rural areas like Stratford—and including among "common people" the sons of the bourgeoisie like John Shakespeare—were private and even unwitnessed spousals. Both *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* would have played well in provincial theaters such as the Wine Street playhouse, Bristol.¹⁸

From what we have said, it should be clear that Claudio and Isabella are sympathetic characters; that the author sides with Claudio and Julietta's predicament is underlined in the conclusion, where the moralist Angelo turns out to have contracted his own spousals with Mariana, whom he abandoned. Witnesses or no, Claudio and Julietta are married since they both acknowledge the same. *Measure For Measure* deals not with civil, written marriage contracts, but spoken marriage contracts. Civil marriage contracts are to Claudio's marriage as a printed text is to a play in performance. Having said to Juliet the sentence of spousals *de praesenti*, the appropriate legal sentence, excepting public humiliation, is Isabella's: "O, let him marry her" (I. iv. 48). The long delay

of this sentence, which is proper both to the court at Norwich archdeaconry and to the genre of comedy, creates the predominant justice of the play; but the delay is so long as to almost subvert its importance. This just sentence had to be delayed until the return of the Duke, but did it have to wait until fourteen lines from the end? At this point, “She, Claudio, that you wrong’d, look you restore,” apparently recognizes that they were married all along, that the only lack was a matter of form. In ending, Shakespeare gives the story of Claudio and Juliet less emphasis than the story of Mariana and Angelo, and the surprise story of the Duke and Isabella becomes all the more surprising, I should add, because it suggests that the supposed slanders Lucio is pilloried for, to wit that the Duke is hot-blooded, are true.

Measure for Measure ends literally in an “out of court settlement.” Act V takes place at the *limen* to the city, and it includes other liminal elements such as Angelo’s putting off the robes of power. The Duke has ordered that this moment and place be specifically ordained for legal appeal such as occurred in the canon Perogative Court or the High Court of Arches. The outdoor session suggests a wandering, peripatetic justice at best, or a displaced justice. Where is justice in Vienna? Nowhere in it, but outside, wherever the Duke goes. The presiding justice of this court changes, from the Duke to Escalus to the Duke again. The causes heard range from matrimonial contracts (Mariana, plaintiff, vs. Angelo) to defamation (Duke, plaintiff, vs. Lucio), the two greatest classifications of lay suits in the real ecclesiastical courts of Shakespeare’s day (excepting tithes and testaments). In one case, Isabella’s charge of Angelo’s sexual misconduct and judicial malfeasance, the canonical infraction is superceded by the civil charge of extortion against the then presiding justice in Vienna. Such a case would normally be heard in an appeals court such as the Duke has charged this to be.

If *Measure for Measure* ends in a rash of civil and canon charges and settlements, the courtship in *All’s Well* ends in a courtroom, in fact a “bawdy court” usurped by a civil adjudicator, namely, the King of France. *All’s Well That Ends Well* contains one deceptive spousal, by which Count Rossillion believes he has seduced Diana, the daughter of a Florentine widow.¹⁹ Actually, unknown to him, he has slept with his wife, whom he left before his marriage was consummated. This play concludes with a scene very like those that actually took place in the “bawdy courts” of the Tudor period, but here the King of France is the presiding justice. In attesting her spousals with Count Rosillion, Diana calls upon the foot-in-mouth Parolles as a witness, as if before a church court: “Do you know he promis’d me marriage” (V. iii. 255)? Parolles, who has given

perhaps too much testimony, especially to those he thought Russian enemies, does finally try to hold his tongue: "Faith, I know more than I'll speak... Yet I was in that credit with them at that time that I knew of their going to bed, and of other motions, as promising marriage [doubtless staged with a fearful glance toward Bertram] and things which would derive me ill will to speak of. Therefore I will not speak what I know" (V. iii. 256-67). The King as presiding justice corrects him on the nature of his testimony: "Thou hast spoken already, unless thou canst say they are married." That is, Parolles has given sufficient evidence of spousals *de futuro*, but not yet *de praesenti*, although the exchange of rings, vows in the present tense, and sexual consummation were a marriage in fact, barring prior spousals or diriment exclusions such as monastic oath or consanguinity.

Because the audience knows of the prior contract to Helena thought dead, the King does not proceed, as an ecclesiastical jurist would, to question the tense of the spousal sentence. Rather, Shakespeare focuses on the marriage token, the ring, which in the popular mind bore much weight.²⁰ In fact, the ring itself had little significance in canon law: consent was the defining *sine qua non*. The King no longer interrogates as a church court justice; rather, he asks questions like a naive viewer of the play so far. In a Shakespearean plot recapitulation, the King proceeds to unravel—or really, to ravel further, until Helena's entrance—plot questions surrounding the marriage token: "The ring you say was yours? ...Where did you buy it, or who gave it you?" To the King's interrogatory, Diana almost chirps, "It was not given me, nor did I buy it" (V. iii. 272). Diana is the incarnation of a riddle, and her answering can be played in a clownish, teasing vein as in so many scenes where a Costard or a Touchstone misinterprets or questions a word. The King cross-examines in staccato interruptions, or to coin a word, *hemistichomythia*: "Who lent it you?...Where did you find it then?" Diana returns denials that appear to challenge the King's word choice, so he reiterates the question of course, emphasizing different words: *lent it, find it, gave it*. His patience and his word-ward end simultaneously, with an exasperated, "Take her away!" The King's procedure here, where he appears to descend from judge to solicitor and where justice no longer appears disinterested, also reflects the period customs in manorial and canon courts, during which the presiding justice played a most active role in questioning. As if this were not complicated enough, Shakespeare adds Diana's parting accusation of Lafew, the final straw of confusion before Helena's entrance.

Excepting the fact that the King married him, Bertram even at the end of the play could have won, in the real canon courts of England, an

annulment on the basis of coercion or lack of consent. Bertram's attempt to escape marriage would probably satisfy canon law, because lack of consummation demonstrated lack of consent; and, according to Houlbrooke, "Judges upheld no contracts clearly shown by the evidence to have been vitiated by coercion."²¹ Nor does the bed-trick demonstrate consent, surely. Of course, Bertram's case is fraught with legal ambiguity, because the one major English exception to the canon rule of consent was the right of the monarch vested in the Court of Wards. Historically, the French King did not have the same right, although in other ways he held more absolute power than the English monarch. Giving the French King this vestigial power of the English ruler, a power at odds with the canon law of consent and at odds with the landowners over whom it was exercised, Shakespeare foisted onto the foreign head of state an emblem of English monarchical tyranny. Although Bertram could take his case to an ecclesiastical court, such a conclusion, such "real justice," would thwart the plot and dynamic of the play; justice to Bertram must be sacrificed to the expectations of oral culture, that romance heroes or heroines who solve the testing task be rewarded, and that the spoken word be held inviolate.²²

Because the oral word is so slippery, yet powerful enough to kill (*Leonato*. "Art thou the slave that with thy breath hast kill'd / Mine innocent child?" *MAAN*, V. i. 263), other signs besides linguistic ones are used to embody and memorialize oral exchanges. The handshake is one such sign that has come down to our time, although today it is associated not with marriage but with business. Throughout Shakespeare's plays a remarkable number of spousal handshakes take place, often in prominent scenes such as the very last in the fifth act, or the first in the third act (which also contains so many of the most often quoted speeches). Many of these spousal handshakes are *de futuro*, although they may include that curious present tense used as future definite. For instance, Miranda says, "I am your wife, if you will marry me" (*Temp*, III. i. 8). Very few lines later comes the handshake.

Miranda. . . My husband then?
 Ferdinand. Ay, with a heart as willing
 As bondage e'er of freedom. Here's my hand.
 Miranda. And mine, with my heart in't. And now farewell
 Till half an hour hence.

(87-91)

Another characteristic of Shakespearean handshake scenes is that the couple immediately part or exit, or both. Shakespeare does not leave his

characters lingering on stage, shaking and shaking, as Dryden might, except in *The Winter's Tale*, (IV. iii. 363-403). This passage contains at least three handshakes, including the most sensuous handshake in all the plays, Florizel's: "I take thy hand, this hand, / As soft as dove's down and as white as it, / Or Ethiopian's tooth, or the fann'd snow. . . ." Observing this, Polixines comments, in one of those Shakespearean stage directions imbedded in the text, "How prettily the young swain seems to wash / The hand was fair before!" Florizel and Perdita join hands during his oath, "That were I crown'd the most imperial monarch. . ." and during the official patriarchal handshake initiated by Perdita's shepherd step-father, "Take hands, a bargain" (383)! After the Shepherd's dowry offer, Florizel asks him, "But come on, / Contract us 'fore these witnesses," to which the Shepherd again responds, "Come, your hand; / And daughter, yours" (390). Not by accident does Polixines choose this exact moment, that of the official spousal handshake, to interrupt, "Soft, swain, awhile, beseech you. / Have you a father?" Polixines here treats Florizel like Shakespeare's patriarchal senes (Shylock, Egeus, Duke Frederick, Brabantio, Cymbeline and Lear) treat their runaway daughters (Jessica, Hermia, Celia, Desdemona, Imogen, and Cordelia). Between Florizel and Perdita, patriarchy intervenes, although I believe they are really married for a minute or so—the shortest marriage in the opus. After all, Polixines ends it with, "Mark your divorce, young sir" (417).

Warned by W. W. Lawrence that "law in Shakespeare's plays is queer business," we nevertheless have discovered in four plays the interaction between canon law, or social convention, and dramatic convention.²³ By reading the plays in relation to the oral culture of Tudor and Stuart England, especially unwritten contracts, we have seen how Shakespeare "plays" with and to that culture, how he wrote for some people who could not read or write, nor distinguish "I will [this]" from "I will" (future), people for whom one's "word" was especially important. Because of the sexual discrimination in the education of the period (how many Elizabethan girls went to Latin grammar school?), many of those who composed the oral culture would have been women—possibly even the wives of the bourgeoisie—for whom two of these plays, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well that Ends Well*, and their enforcement of oral customs held special appeal. In fact, the plays as performed constituted no small part of their spoken culture.

Marriage is a prominent feature of Shakespeare's comedies and romances, and especially of their closure; often offstage sacred rites are merely suggested, while onstage spousals and individual consent are foregrounded. An onstage spousal may represent the offstage rite, as in

Miranda and Ferdinand's handshake prior to their offstage Neapolitan rite, or in Duke Vincentio's ill-timed, "Give me your hand, and say you will be mine" (V. i. 492), or it may have the force of an actual marriage, as in *Much Ado*, where Claudio essentially marries an unknown woman who turns out to be "the former Hero." Even in the later plays, Shakespeare uses gestures that were in real life associated, as Cloten says, with "meaner parties"—the exchange of tokens, the handshake, the spousal—as stage conventions regardless of social class. Spousals provide certain dramatic advantage over formulaic nuptial ceremonies; moreover, they avoid offending religious authorities by keeping sacred rites offstage. It appears that spousals, which in the early comedies sufficed for marriages, came more and more to represent offstage rites; this change may even have represented a slackening in Shakespeare's own tolerance for folk ways. After all, by the time he wrote *The Tempest*, he was a successful burgher who had married off one daughter—although this favorite one only managed to espouse a mere (as we know from *All's Well*) physician. Perhaps he had left behind the rural customs of his youth, such as his own apparent spousals.

Bristol Community College

Notes

¹*Constitution and Canons Ecclesiastical*, 1604, ed. H.A. Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923). See especially Canons C through CIII. Recent studies of canon court records include the essential work by Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People During the English Reformation, 1502-1570* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). For earlier in the century, and for London, see Richard Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation*.

²Cloten denies the force of oral contract, in the line prior to those quoted, "It is no contract, none; / And through it be allowed. . . ." All Shakespeare quotations I take from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blamemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

³Henry Swinburne, "Of Contracting Spousals by Signs," *A Treatise of Spousals or Matrimonial Contracts* (London: Clavell, 1686), p. 206. Swinburne probably wrote this volume around 1605; by the time it was published, the anonymous editor-lawyer who introduces it notes how spousal customs have diminished: "'Tis possible at first sight some Men may imagine that Spousals are now in great measure worn out of use, and by consequence that discourses of that Nature can yield little or no benefit to the Reader" ("To the Reader," n.p., first leaf).

⁴The same anonymous lawyer (above, n.3) considers "Wilt thou, John. . ." to be an encapsulation of the old form of betrothal, a promise of future marriage, not a marriage in fact. In his version, formal ceremonies include the *de futuro* statement and the *de praesenti*, not as in former days divided by the space of some weeks (say, the posting of banns, etc.).

⁸Swinburne has a long chapter on both *de praesenti* and *de futuro* contracts; nevertheless, he knows that, “the simplicity of the Vulgar sort . . . cannot distinguish ‘I will take’ from ‘I do take’ ” (62).

⁹A twentieth century spousal account appeared in two bonafide popular culture publications, the *Enquirer* for March 27, 1984, and the book is excerpted by Terry Koford Moore, *The Beauty and the Billionaire*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

Hand in hand we walked out to the highest point and knelt down under the stars, said our vows together, and prayed that God would open up our hearts and join us in holy matrimony forever. Then Howard slipped a ring in the shape of an owl around my finger, picked me up off my knees, brushed off the jacket we had knelt on, placed it round my shoulders and sealed my lips with kisses. . . . Married forever, we drove down the hill (pp. 55-56).

Terry Moore’s account of her spousals with Howard Hughes omits the vows that presumably both parties had memorized, whereas in *Two Gentlemen* we overhear the vows. Otherwise, the scenes are almost identical: just as Howard slips a ring onto Terry’s finger, Proteus slips a ring on Julia’s (through Julia, first, on Proteus’s—theirs differs both by being female-initiated, and by being a double-ring spousal!); as Howard “sealed” Terry’s lips with kisses (note the Shakespearean verb that Terry or the ghostwriter uses), so Julia suggests, “And seal the bargain with a holy kiss.” Although Proteus and Julia do not necessarily kneel, the scene could be played that way; and as for Howard and Terry’s kneeling, it seems very stagey, very Shakespearean. But note well that Proteus shakes Julia’s hand; Hughes does not. That one gesture, to a businessman, means more than all the others, and Hughes omits it. (Or possibly the writer omits it from her account because a handshake is not a literary convention in this genre, whereas “sealing lips” is required.)

⁷Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, p. 55.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁹Charles Donahue, Jr., “The Canon Law on the Formation of Marriage and Social Practice in the Later Middle Ages,” *Journal of Family History*, 8(1983), 130-158. On his late medieval evidence, Donahue observes, “More people in England seem to have engaged in *de praesenti* clandestine marriages than in France” (p. 155). His English evidence comes from one parish at Ely.

¹⁰G. Blakemore Evans, editor, *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), note to MFM, I ii. 145, p. 553.

¹¹If we translate Elizabethan “love” into modern American “relationship,” and if we confine “friends” to one meaning even then, “family,” we have, “our families, from whom we thought it appropriate to hide our relationship till time has made them for us.” For “friends,” see C.T. Onions, *A Shakespeare Glossary*, 2nd edition revised (Oxford: Clarendon, 1949).

¹²Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, p. 58.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹⁴Shakespeare’s own marriage required an exception to the posting of banns on three successive Sundays or feast days, an exception evidently allowed under practice which became formulated as Canon CIII in the Canons of 1604. The most salient case where a couple would wish to forego banns would be where they had been living together for some time so that such a publication would be an onerous insult. Shakespeare’s banns would have been interrupted by the Advent season, for they were posted on the last Sunday

allowed, in November, 1582 (when he was 18). The Bond of Surety, dated Nov. 28, specifically charges that “the said willm do upon his owne proper Costes and expense defend & save harmless the right Reverend father in god Lord Iohn bushop of worcester and his offycers for the Licencing them the said willm and Anne to be maried together with once asking of the banns of matrimony” (from the “Bond of Sureties, dated Nov. 28, 1582,” in G. Blakemore Evans, ed., “Appendix B: Records, Documents, and Allusions,” *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1829). Six months later a baby girl, Susanna, was born, so further delay would have caused unnecessary embarrassment, especially since the Advent season ran through January 13, 1583. There is more than a possibility that, although not really Cloten’s “meaner parties” (Shakespeare’s father having served as High Bailiff and having applied for a coat of arms six years earlier), William himself and Anne were already married “by a true contract.” Of course, to a snob like Cloten, anybody but the royal family was a meaner party.

¹⁵Houlbrooke, *Church Courts*, p. 78.

¹⁶Fray Geronimo de Mandieta, *Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana* (Mexico, Salvador Hayde, 1945).

¹⁷On English “rough music” or “skimmingtons,” see E.P. Thompson, “‘Rough Music’: Le Charivari anglais,” *Annales*, vol. 27 no. 2 (March-April, 1972), 285-312, and B. H. Cunnington, “A ‘Skimmington’ in 1618,” *Folk-Lore*, 41 (1930), 287-290.

¹⁸See Mark Pilkinton, “The Playhouse in Wine Street, Bristol,” *Theatre Notebook*, 1981, 14-21.

¹⁹One could do an interesting study of widows in Shakespeare, and in *AWEW*, where of course the Countess must be included with Diana’s mother. The precarious social and economic position of widows is summarized by Machiavelli’s Sostrata in *La Mandragola*: “una donna che non ha figliuoli non ha casa. Muorsi el marito, resta com’una bestia, abandonato da ognuno” (*Il teatro e tutti gli scritti letterari*, ed. F. Gaeta, Milan, Feltrinelli, 1965, p. 89). For historical studies of the widow’s social position, see Christianne Klapisch and Michel Demonet, “The Rural Tuscan Family in the 15th Century,” in Foster and Ranum, ed. and trans., *Family and Society: Selections from Annales* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 50ff. See also Dianne Hughes, “From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe,” *Journal of Family History*, 3 (1978), 262-290, and Stanley Chojnacki, “Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 4 (1974-75), 571-590.

²⁰Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, pp. 60-61: “The importance of the ring (and of other tokens, such as gloves, coins, and kerchiefs, which in the popular estimation often partook of the special character enjoyed by the ring) seems to have been much greater in the eyes of the parties, and more particularly in the eyes of male suitors, than it was in the view of the law.”

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 64.

²²For the relation of *All’s Well* to medieval tales, see William Witherle Lawrence, *Shakespeare’s Problem Comedies* (1931 rpt: New York, Ungar, 1960).

²³*Ibid.*, p. 97.

Theories of History in *Richard II* by H.R. Coursen

I do not believe that Shakespeare's history plays emerge from a theory of history, either providential or Marxist. A theory of history would tend to reduce the plays to thesis or allegory. The plays work their way out, to paraphrase Matthew Arnold, on darkling plains "where ignorant armies clash by night" I will grant that Richmond's victory at Bosworth Field does signify an allegorical ending to decades of civil butchery, but that exception occurs, in Shakespeare's career, before his profound examination of the sources of the Wars of the Roses in the *Second Henriad*. If Shakespeare has a theory of history, it expresses itself in two ways: a) the meaning of an event cannot be known until its ramifications have worked their way outward across the years, and b) even the most powerful politicians usually function only in response to the ramifications of their own actions. If Henry the Fifth seems to be the exception to the second premise—and he is, to some extent—we must remind ourselves that his French War represents a fulfillment of his father's advice to "busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (2*HIV*, IV. v. 213-214)¹, that the goal of the Cambridge Conspiracy was to replace Henry with Mortimer, the heir Richard II had named long before, that Henry would just as soon not fight at Agincourt, and that he prays the "God of battles" would not remember "the fault / My father made in compassing the crown!" (1*HV*, IV. i. 290-291). The victory at Agincourt may represent an heroic expiation for the death of Richard. The marriage of Henry and Katherine may seem almost a "comic ending" to this historical sequence. But the Wars of the Roses wait in the wings, as the final Chorus to Henry V warns.

One could argue that Cranmer's blessing of the infant Elizabeth at the end of *Henry VIII* (V. vi. 15-63) represents the final step in the teleological thrust of Shakespeare's vision of history. Cranmer's prophecy hearkens back to that delivered to Elizabeth's grandfather, then the young Richmond, by Henry VI (3*HVI*, IV. vi. 68-76). Tempting as that thesis may be in its pressure towards a restoration of sacramental monarchy in England, it seems to me to make the history plays too cohesive, too much the function of a single creative act. And I speak as one often accused of seeing the *Second Henriad* just that way. Shakespeare had to function out of his own history, and it may be that Will Kemp's departure from the company in 1599 meant that Falstaff

could not “die of a sweat” in France (2HIV, Epilogue. 28).

Whatever Shakespeare’s theory of history may or may not have been, his characters do have theories of history. Three primary theories of history exist in *Richard II*, and several secondary viewpoints emerge in response to these primary theses. It could be argued that all theories of history in the play are reactive, in that they respond to actions Richard has already taken—his commissioned murder of Gloucester, for which no motive is given, although motives abound in the sources, and his leasing out of royal lands—or that Richard takes within the dramatic context. Competing theories of history in *Richard II*, regardless of their origin, create the conflicts that make the play dramatic, in other words, that make it a play.

The three primary theories are those of Gaunt, the sacramentalist, Richard, the master of ceremonies, and Bolingbroke, the pragmatist—pragmatism being a theory that denies the value of theories, as in a way, *Richard II* does, *qua* play.

Gaunt’s England is a timeless zone which constantly returns the energy of the grace of God and within which benevolent context the kingdom lives. It is an “other Eden, demi-paradise” (II. i. 42), a generator of chivalric combat and of crusades to “the sepulcher in stubborn Jewry / Of the world’s ransom, blessed Mary’s son” (II. i. 55-56). England, for Gaunt, is itself a sacramental entity, a visible manifestation of the invisible power and grace of God. But the land has been debased from inestimable quality to commercial quantity, “is now leas’d out. . . Like to a tenement or pelting farm,” and Gaunt dies “pronouncing it” (II. i. 59-60).²

Richard has denied the sacramental continuum to himself and his royal plurality. The exchange of positive energy between England and God has been cut off by Richard’s spilling of Gloucester’s “sacred blood” (I. ii. 12 & 17) and by his reducing “this blessed plot” (II. i. 50) to “rotten parchment bonds” (II. i. 64). Ritual—or God-contacting activity—cannot occur in Richard’s kingdom. That does not mean, as I have been accused of arguing, that a mass is necessarily inefficacious because conducted by a corrupt priest. It does mean that “God’s substitute, / His deputy anointed in His sight” (I. ii. 37-38) has committed sacrilegious acts which prevent him from being a channel through which God’s positive energy can flow into England. If Gaunt’s argument to the Duchess of Gloucester in I. ii. is correct, only God can resolve the issue of England’s alienation from His benevolence. For man to attempt to do so will compound the problem. Gaunt’s positive thesis is never allowed to materialize. His negative adumbration does, it seems, come true.

Richard can only preside over ceremonies drained of their signifi-

cance, like the aborted trial-by-combat between Bolingbroke and Mowbray. That combat does not occur, of course, but even if it had, it would not have rendered the judgment of god. God's justice, if it exists at all, indicts Richard, who would pretend to preside over an adjudication of his own crime. Richard can only cancel the trial with makeshift and transparent politics:

And for we think the eagle-winged pride
 Of sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts,
 With rival-hating envy, set on you
 To wake our peace, which in our country's cradle
 Draws the sweet infant breath of gentle sleep;
 Which, so rous'd up with boist'rous untun'd drums,
 With harsh-resounding trumpets' dreadful bray,
 And grating shock of wrathful iron arms,
 Might from our quiet confines fright fair peace
 And make us wade even in our kindred's blood. . . .

(I. iii. 129-139)

Here, peace frightens peace.³ Richard is like Neville Chamberlain, waving a "rotten parchment bond" with Hitler's signature upon it, and speaking of "peace in our time"—in 1938. Richard is correct at some unconscious level of his rhetoric. His hastily crafted compromise will fright fair peace from England for generations to come. But, then, Richard is already compromised.

Later, drawing on his self-selected role of martyr, Richard will dictate a devastating anti-ceremony calculated to show Bolingbroke and England that the all-important intangibilities of kingship are now as meaningless as images in a mirror, indeed, lie "crack'd in an hundred shivers" (IV. i. 290). "God save King Henry, unking'd Richard says" (IV. i. 221). Richard forces a reluctant Bolingbroke into a mime that captures the latter's rise to power: "Here, cousin, seize the crown" (IV. i. 182), and tells everyone just what such a seizure is worth: "God pardon all oaths that are broke to me! / God keep all oaths unbroke are made to thee!" (IV. i. 215-216). But Richard's was the antecedent disruption of continuity—in his arrogant confiscation of Bolingbroke's inheritance—and Richard must find himself "a traitor with the rest" (IV. i. 249). Later, Pistol will reiterate the loss of intrinsic value in the kingdom in a line that also glances at the emptiness of sacrament: "For oaths are straws, and men's faith are wafer cakes" (HV, II. iii. 50).

While it can be argued that both Richard II and Henry V preside over kingdoms devoid of the most significant intangibles, that each admits as much, and that both represent a version of "the cult of personality,"

Henry V masters the hollow crown he inherits. He knows how to marshal power and his own superb manipulative and rhetorical skills into his ceremonies, but not how to restore those ceremonies to ritual significance. His attribution of his successes to God is merely another evidence of his political skill. Henry obviously knows how to enlist public support for his war of aggression. George Jacobson, a special assistant to the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam during the 1968 Tet offensive draws this conclusion in a recent *Newsweek* interview: "the moment you learn your country is not 100% behind you, you get the hell out—no matter what the losses may be."⁴

I don't hold with current revisionist opinion that the American public was somehow responsible for the Tet offensive. It seems to me that it was General Giap's idea and that the offensive emerged from a nation 100% behind the concept of its own liberation. Richard II, on the other hand, is in no position to conduct a foreign war:

The commons hath he pill'd with grievous taxes,
And quite lost their hearts; the nobles hath he fin'd
For ancient quarrels, and quite lost their hearts.

(II i. 246-248)

If he does wish to "deck our soldiers for these Irish wars" (I iv. 62), he must, anticipating Lyndon Johnson, order the self-destructive seizure of the Lancastrian estates.

While Bolingbroke becomes Richard's victim as the latter's theatrics describe an empty crown, Bolingbroke emerges the consummate opportunist. An ambitious young man, scion of a virtual principality within the kingdom, Bolingbroke poses first as justicer, usurping the king's abandoned role, listening to the blood of Gloucester crying to him like "sacrificing Abel's" (I i. 104). Bolingbroke knows what he is doing, even if his immediate goal is to create fissures of unrest within which he can maneuver. He has discussed all of this with his father, as we learn at the beginning of the play. We learn in the play's second scene that Gaunt has command of the facts the first scene obscured: Richard, "God's substitute, . . . Hath caus'd [Gloucester's] death" (I ii. 37-39). Bolingbroke himself becomes the victim of injustice, of course, but engages in legalisms upon his return to England, elevating himself within a world where other names are reduced or erased: "As I was banish'd, I was banish'd Hereford. / But as I come, I come for Lancaster" (II iii. 113-114). He quickly takes retribution for the erasure he has suffered, telling Bushy and Green that they have

From my own windows torn my household coat,
 Ras'd out my impresse, leaving me no sign,
 Save men's opinions and my living blood,
 To show the world I am a gentleman. . . .

(III. i. 24-27)

Reassuming the role of justicer, this time for wrongs done to him, he orders his enemies "dispatch'd" (III. i. 35) by his hatchetman, Northumberland.

Bolingbroke is, of course, reacting—against Gloucester's unpunished murderers and to the seizure of his inheritance. His reactions, however, seem to have a personal goal which his pose of righteous indignation does not obscure. He moves blithely ahead, embracing his motives as they present themselves, defining his goals only when they are virtually within his grasp, responding to the cues that even Richard provides:

Set on towards London, cousin, is it so?
 Yes, my good lord.

(III. iii. 208-209)

York admonishes him: "Take not, good cousin, further than you should / Lest you mistake the heavens are over our heads" (III. iii. 16-17). In responding, Bolingbroke does not claim exactly to be an agent of God's will. He breaks off before his need for instant intelligence: "I know it, uncle, and oppose not myself / Against their will. But who comes here" (III. iii. 18-19)?

Again, Bolingbroke knows what he is doing. If power no longer derives from above, it must be developed from a system of contracts. We observe Bolingbroke employing his as-yet-unattained wealth almost like a character in *Vanity Fair*, engaging in agreements that build a base that belies his disclaimers, as when Ross and Willoughby offer their services to him:

Evermore thanks, the exchequer of the poor,
 Which, till my infant fortune comes to years,
 Stands for my bounty.

(II. iii. 65-67)

The feudal contract was hardly a new concept in the early 15th Century, but represents the reinvention of the only model available to Bolingbroke. Geographical considerations alone would argue that the linkage of Lancaster and Northumberland represents more than merely a feudal contract.

A conservative defender of the ancient right of inheritance, Bolingbroke finds himself leading a revolution based upon the principles of a prior age. But he is falling into the historical trap of which York warned Richard:

Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time
His charters and his customary rights;
Let not tomorrow then ensue today.

(II i. 195-197)

Soon, as Henry IV, Bolingbroke is compromised by Mortimer's superior claim, and dismisses his already disgruntled supporters with caustic complaints about majesty's inability to "endure / The moody frontier of a servant brow" (*I HIV*, I. iii. 18-19). Bolingbroke's ability to "make history" is severely limited. He repeats Richard's mistake by undermining the already shaky premises of his kingship. Even after having Gloucester killed, Richard was still king "by fair sequence and succession," as York tells him (II i. 199). Even after having Richard killed, Bolingbroke remains king *de facto*. He had posed originally as a redresser of grievances, but that course forced him to enormities—usurpation and regicide—which made power the sole premise of kingship and elicited a seemingly endless sequence of rebellions. His attempt to behave as an absolute monarch, in neglect of many contracts and covenants—including the increasingly specific and troublesome Oath of Doncaster (cf. *I HIV*, V. i. 41-46)—mirrors Richard's desperate summoning of the divine and legal principles he has himself violated. But Bolingbroke is a better politician than was Richard. "This new world," as Fitzwater calls it (IV. i. 79), is both made by and made for Bolingbroke. Much as he would enjoy the sanctions and continuities that Richard inherited and destroyed, Bolingbroke learns that his crown is the focal point of a "common 'larum bell'" (*2 HIV*, III i. 17) and that all he can do is to confront "necessities" (*2 HIV*, III i. 93) in the sleepless middle of his nights.

The other characters in *Richard II* either resist the advent of "this new world" or go with its flow, as does the opportunistic Northumberland. In a world in which time is no more than money, Northumberland, a modern "communicator," can claim, "only to be brief / Left I his title cut" (III. iii. 10-11). York replies, "The time hath been, / Would you have been so brief with him, he would / Have been so brief with you to shorten you, / For taking so the head, your whole head's length" (III. iii. 11-14). But that time is no more. It is Bolingbroke who is taking heads. The play's two duchesses argue on the familial grounds that both Gaunt, in the cases of both brother and son, and York, in the case of his son, reject Bolingbroke

cannily employs the argument by reminding York of his son and telling York what Gaunt would have done for Aumerle had he been wronged as Bolingbroke has been (II. iii. 125-128). Aumerle and his party take the sacrament to seal their conspiracy to kill the king at Oxenford. The most sacred of rituals sanctifies the most heinous of crimes. But the murder would occur in the name of a rightful claimant to the throne, as would the assassination of Henry V by Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey at Southampton.

York can only catalogue his patience—it is too late for anything but such rationalizations—as he objects to Richard’s act of confiscation. York argues that time is the context which gives meaning to human activity. We are in a different world than that imaged by Gaunt, a world like that described by Michael in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*. York’s, however, is still a world in which the microcosm can disturb the macrocosm. To interfere with one sequence—that of lawful inheritance—is to disrupt the rhythm of time itself. If Gaunt argued England’s cooperation with positive supernatural powers, York argues an equally valid, if diminished, principle. Time is a manifestation of a nature prior to and superior to any action that even a king may take. York espouses a theory which, belatedly, argues that man’s law is a codification of natural law. York is ignored, of course, and, later, in a frantic burst of loyalty towards Bolingbroke—perhaps a compensation for York’s failure to save Richard—insists on the execution of his own son.

Hotspur, who is “Percy” in *Richard II*, has no theory of history. Nor does he develop one. He accedes to Bolingbroke’s neo-feudalism, but soon rebels, to become an agent of disorder within an already unsettled commonwealth. His personal code of honor is narrow and selfish. A great warrior, he cannot lead other men, as we may be reminded when we hear Henry V before Agincourt: “if it be a sin to covet honor, / I am the most offending soul alive” (HV, IV. iii. 28-29). Henry dusts off the old concept, holds it aloft for admiration, then generously bestows it upon his “band of brothers” (HV, IV. iii. 60). Hotspur is a magnificent anachronism, a Black Prince living a century too late. He can sneer at Prince Hal’s brand of chivalry:

His answer was, he would unto the stews,
And from the common’st creature pluck a glove,
And wear it as a favor, and with that
He would unhorse the lustiest challenger.

(V. iii. 15-18)

But Hotspur describes Prince Hal's subsequent career and his own demise. The combat at Oxford is cancelled because of the threat of regicide. Politics override the chivalric arts and "The better part of valor is discretion," as Falstaff says (*I HIV*, V. iv. 119-120). If Hotspur learns the lesson, the revelation lies in phrasing just beyond the sentence Hal completes for him. A theory of history other than anarchism might not have saved him. But without one he is doomed. "If we live, we live to tread on kings" (*I HIV*, V. ii. 85) is a call to chaos, not to arms.

Mowbray is a special case. He believes that the confession he made to Gaunt " 'ere [Mowbray] last receiv'd the sacrament" (I. i. 139) has cleared him of an intended crime. In the excellent BBC-TV version of the play, John Gielgud's Gaunt nodded as Richard Owen's stalwart Mowbray turned to him. The banished Mowbray lives out England's crusading past ironically, an existential sliver of Gaunt's embracing vision of what all of England once was:

Many a time hath banish'd Norfolk fought
For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,
Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross
Against black pagans, Turks, and Saracens;
And, toil'd with works of war, retir'd himself
To Italy, and there at Venice gave
His body to that pleasant country's earth,
And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,
Under whose colors he had fought so long.

(IV. i. 92-100)

Carlisle describes a solitary warrior whose entire career is played out during a few brief and brutal months of English history. The point, of course, is that, while Hotspur should have lived in a former age, Mowbray does live in a different time, in that zone described by Gaunt which itself has suffered banishment from England. England's time is dictated by a politics no longer marching under "the ensign of the Christian cross."

Bolingbroke might wish to revert to the world his father, Gaunt, described, and go

As far as to the sepulcher of Christ—
Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engag'd to fight.

(*I HIV*, I. i. 19-21)

Even as he speaks, however, he knows that "Therefore we meet not now" (I. i. 30) and that he "must neglect / Our holy purpose to Jerusalem" (I. i. 100-101). Richard lies "breathless" (V. vi. 31), and while Henry does not

repeat his need for personal expiation, “frighted peace” in England has found no “time...to pant” in the year since Richard’s death. Bolingbroke’s speech is merely political, a pious facade thrown up in front of the pressure he is beginning to feel from Mortimer and the rival faction. Bolingbroke’s former rival, Mowbray, has already achieved—within another concept of time and of history—the goal that, for Bolingbroke, becomes increasingly unattainable. Even when all the logistics and deputations necessary to his project are ready, Bolingbroke has fallen into his final illness, the want of more than “a little personal strength” (2 *HIV*, IV. iv. 7). His strength has drained out into “this debate that bleedeth at our door” (IV. iv. 2). The purpose of Bolingbroke’s regime has been to subdue the civil strife that his accession engendered and to keep the kingship within the Lancastrian grip. Bolingbroke comes to recognize as much. Whatever may be said of him, he does the job.

Carlisle is a prophet “Stirr’d up by God” (IV. i. 134) who shares the vision of that “prophet new inspir’d,” Gaunt (II. i. 31). But Carlisle does not look back to “This nurse, this teeming womb of royal kings” (II. i. 51). Carlisle looks ahead:

The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act;
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels. . . .

(IV. i. 138-140)

The magnificent career of Mowbray, which Carlisle has just described, plays ironically against the crucifixion of a nation he now predicts:

Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny
Shall here inhabit, and this land be call’d
The field of Golgotha and dead men’s skulls.
O, if you raise this house against this house,
It will the woofullest division prove
That ever fell upon this cursed earth.

(IV. i. 141-148)

This prophecy reaches deeper than do Richard’s self-serving comparisons of himself with Christ. Carlisle incorporates both the Wars of the Roses which Shakespeare has already depicted and the warnings of the New Testament: “For if a kingdome be devided against it self, that kingdome can not stand. / Or if a house be devided against it self, that house can not continue” (Mark: III. 24-25. Geneva Version). If Gaunt’s vision of history is sacramental and relatively static, Carlisle’s is biblical and negatively dynamic. Unlike the fall of Adam and Eve, which opens

into the bloodbath of human history but ultimately to “New Heav’ns, new Earth, Ages of endless date / Founded in righteousness and peace and love, / To bring forth fruits Joy and eternal Bliss” (*Paradise Lost*: XII. 548-550), the fall Carlisle predicts is not fortunate. That is, of course, unless we accept Cranmer’s blessing of Elizabeth as the positive culmination of the ways of history as the Archangel’s promises to Adam are the ultimate justification of “the ways of God.”

In the BBC-TV production, as Clifford Rose’s Carlisle was led off under arrest, the camera dollied back to include Charles Gray’s York, looking at Carlisle in dumbfounded admiration. It was a moment that linked two characters who have no direct contact in the play, but who have objected to crucial actions and have predicted their results.

Although he can hardly be called a prophet, Richard himself demonstrates an accurate grasp of coming events in his admonishment of Northumberland:

The time shall not be many hours of age
 More than it is, ere foul sin gathering head
 Shall break into corruption. Thou shalt think,
 Though he divide the realm and give thee half,
 It is too little, helping him to all;
 He shalt think that thou, which knowest the way
 To plant unrightful kings, wilt know again,
 Being ne’er so little urg’d, another way
 To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne.
 The love of wicked men converts to fear,
 That fear to hate, and hate turns one or both
 To worthy danger and deserved death.

(V. i. 57-68)

Having fomented a social jungle as vicious in its way as that explored in *King Lear*, Richard provides a precis of that later play and, more immediately, an account of what is about to happen in England. Perhaps one of the corollaries of Shakespeare’s sense of history—as it works out in *Richard II*—is that only the powerless, like the workers in the Queen’s garden, can define clearly the results of any action that power dictates. The powerful are blind to consequences. The powerless must become Cassandras.

For a time it seems that Bolingbroke can conduct kingship as farce, as in the frantic gage-gathering scene (IV. i.) which he closes with stern control, and in the “Beggar and the King” (V. iii. 80) sequence in which he pardons Aumerle. But the problem of his “living fear” (V. iv. 2) remains. His wordless suggestion that Exton kill Richard is an acquiescence to his

inability to control the forces that are pressing him into a position more vulnerable than was Richard's at the outset.

Bolingbroke's calculated magnanimity in pardoning Carlisle is dashed by Exton's entrance with Richard's corpse. Bolingbroke can make a "Cain" (V. vi. 43) of Exton, as he would have done to the murderers of Abel (I. i. 105), but the new King knows that the blood is on his hands and that it is the blood of a king. The matter of Gloucester's death, now irrelevant, drifts away into its mystery. Bolingbroke will project a crusade that picks up increasingly political colorations as it is reiterated. He will not lead his crusade, of course, but does accept his destiny with final piety. Warwick informs Henry that the room in which he fainted is "call'd Jerusalem" (2 *HIV*, IV. v. 233). "Laud be to God!" Henry responds,

Even there my life must end.
It hath been prophesied to me many years
I should not die but in Jerusalem,
Which vainly I suppos'd the Holy Land.
But bear me to that chamber; there I'll lie.
In that Jerusalem shall Harry die.

(2 *HIV*, IV. v. 235-240)

However destructive the history that Henry has unleashed by stepping into the vacuum that Richard created, Henry himself seems to surrender willingly at the last to the diminished rhythms of the world he has shaped.

Finally, we notice how history changes as it emerges from the profound matrix of *Richard II* and reflects the *ad hoc* quality of "this new world." Young Mowbray and Westmoreland debate at Gaultree Forest, each crafting a different ending to the untold story of the combat between Bolingbroke and the elder Mowbray (2 *HIV*, IV. i. 117-139). The debate predicts that Gaultree Forest will also end short of combat, as Mowbray and his compatriots find themselves short of heads. While Gaunt's grandson, Prince John, can claim of his *Realpolitik* that "God, and not we, hath safely fought today" (2 *HIV*, IV. ii. 121) his manipulation has been transparent. When his brother, Henry V, unmasks the Cambridge conspiracy and elicits from Scroop an admission that "Our purposes God justly hath discover'd" (II. ii. 151), Henry can make a far more credible treason lurking in our way / To hinder our beginnings" (II. ii. 184-186). That claim is undermined, however, by the rationale for what Henry is beginning. Bolingbroke's apparent piety in announcing a crusade "To wash this blood from off my guilty hand" (V. vi. 49) at the end of *Richard II* becomes the purely political "purpose now / To lead

out many to the Holy Land, / Lest rest and lying still might make them look / Too near unto my state" (2 *HIV*, IV. v. 209-212) which his son has translated into an invasion of France. Henry V is shrewd enough to make the events he has generated seem like the will of God, once they have gone his way. But he is a poor prognosticator. He believes that he and Katherine will "compound a boy, half French, half English, that shall go to Constantinople and take the Turk by the beard" (*HV*, V. ii. 208-210). But if, as he says, his father "was thinking of civil wars when he got me" (V. ii. 226-227), we must wonder what Henry V was thinking of when he got Henry VI.

In "this new world," words and even events themselves change in the face of "necessity." Bolingbroke's slight revision of Richard II's indictment of Northumberland erases ambition and emphasizes kinship. What Richard said was, "Northumberland, thou ladder wherewithal / The mounting Bolingbroke ascends my throne. . ." (V. i. 55-56). What Bolingbroke, later, has Richard say is "Northumberland, thou ladder by the which / My cousin Bolingbroke ascends my throne. . ." (2 *HIV*, III. i. 70-71). And Pistol, pondering his cudgelling by Fluellen, says, "patches will I get unto these cudgel'd scars, / And swear I got them in the Gallia wars" (*HV*, V. i. 86-87). In a world which can rewrite history, Pistol writes his own. He will quote Henry V and say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day!" (*HV*, IV. iii. 48).

Bowdoin College

Notes

¹Quotations accord with *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, eds. Hardin Craig and David Bevington, Third Edition (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1980).

²For an extension of this argument, see my *The Leasing Out of England: Shakespeare's Second Henriad* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), particularly Chapter 1.

³Cf. Harold Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 151-152.

⁴*Newsweek* (15 April, 1985), 68.

“The Teeth of Emulation”: Failed Sacrifice in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* by Alan Hager

Brents Stirling, in his seminal essay on primitive sacrificial customs in *Julius Caesar*, “‘Or Else This Were a Savage Spectacle,’” argues that ritual terminology and imagery enter the play largely through Brutus’ attempt “to dignify assassination. . .by lifting it to a level of rite and ceremony.”¹ I argue, however, that human sacrifice is on everyone’s lips in this play. Discussion and representation of ritual destruction of humans to appease the gods, and its ominous “preparation” in “holiday” gatherings, pervade the drama to such an extent as to create a problem in the interpretation of the play.² As G. Wilson Knight has shown about the use of the images of “blood” or “love” in this work, would-be ritual sacrifice, the “savage spectacle,” creates a *leitmotif* that goes well beyond Brutus’ supposed political smokescreen from the earliest moments in the drama.³ In this paper, I hope to demonstrate Shakespeare’s unfolding of this theme and argue that the playwright, in his great Roman play, took occasion to schematize the dangers of man’s reversion to the savage in a crisis of rule in Rome. In *Julius Caesar*, Shakespeare’s initial ambivalence yields to reciprocal rivalry and random group violence that triumph over all conciliation and communion.

The play opens with a puzzle that has two “readings,” like an optical illusion. Shakespeare’s stage presents either the last moment of tragic disintegration or the first of ritual healing: crowd-forming, the grouping of people who then can focus “universal” energy on gods, heroes, and victims. Shakespeare introduces us to the ambivalence of ritual gathering, sanctioned or unsanctioned, in his first words. Two Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius, confront citizens lacking the “sign” of their “profession” (I i. 4)⁴, a group of people who enjoy the anonymity of “holy-day” gear. The tribunes simply do not know from their “best apparel. . .best attire” (I i. 8, 48) who these commoners are, and, as a result of this confusion, the cobbler is free to try his impertinence on them with holiday license:

Flavius. Thou are a cobbler, art thou?

Cobbler. Truly, sir, all that I live by is with the awl.

(I i. 20-21)

Indeed the cobbler lives with the shoe hammer or “awl” but also the “all,” the crowd of individuals in the defilade of indistinguishable clothing.

Flavius recognizes a problem in rule, and he indirectly seeks an admission from the cobbler that he has usurped the tribunes’ own authority to administer and represent the tribes: “Why dost thou lead these men about the streets” (I. i. 28)? The cobbler accepts the imputation in his comic reply: “Truly, sir, to wear out their shoes, to get myself into more work.” But the tribunes are not satisfied he has such a mercenary goal.

When the cobbler finally relents and admits “we make holiday to see Caesar and rejoice in his triumph,” Marullus’ “golden” speech, the first of many in the play, voices tribunal objections to the citizens’ behavior: unauthorized assembly and assumption of power and disloyalty in choosing to glorify Caesar’s victory over Pompey’s sons just as they rejoiced in Pompey’s own victories. The workers stand accused of being unable to distinguish whom they are celebrating, but also of being indistinguishable one from the other. Thus, Marullus’ speech returns to the problems of indecipherable clothing that disguises social and political identity. He says,

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!
 O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome,
 Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
 Have you climbed up to walls and battlements,
 To tow’rs and windows, yea, to chimney tops,
 Your infants in your arms, and there have sat
 The livelong day, with patient expectation,
 To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.
 And when you saw his chariot but appear,
 Have you not made an universal shout,
 That Tiber trembled underneath her banks
 To hear the replication of your sounds
 Made in her concave shores?
 And do you now put on your best attire?
 And do you now cull out a holiday?

(I. i. 35-49)

Marullus’ badgering the crowd with the anaphora of a sequence of rhetorical questions, like a schoolmaster, expresses the threat that a “popular” Caesar might pose to his tribunal power, but the image of the Tiber trembling “beneath her banks” also suggests “flooding” of an urban crowd, as “you blocks, you stones” suggest its weaponry.

We, in the audience, with Flavius’ help, may well assume these artisans have joined up to break laws “upon a laboring day,” (I. i. 4) and

thus we are surprised, I think, when Marullus responds to his own seemingly unanswerable question about “culling out a holiday” privately to Flavius: “You know it is the feast of Lupercal” (I. i. 67). Holiday garb is the proper dressing up of the “all” on the day of the wolf sacred to Mars, Rome’s most ancient fertility rite. The tribunes are denying observation of Rome’s primeval sacrificial rite in dispersing the commoners and denuding the statues, for which they are later “put to silence,” (I. ii. 283) apparently by Caesar.⁵ Thus this crowd-forming can imply both social disintegration and ritual healing, but the former comes to reign in our minds.

Shakespeare goes on to mirror the difficulty the tribunes experience in distinguishing individual plebeians later when Lucius fails to identify elements of the patrician conspiracy. In the opening of the second act, when Brutus asks Lucius if he knows by sight the men with Cassius at the door, the boy responds emphatically,

No, Sir. Their hats are plucked about their ears
 And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
 That by no means I may discover them
 By any mark of favor.

(II. i. 73-76)

The attractive and understating Lucius in his second longest speech in the play calls attention to the problem of undiscoverable identity, the phrase “mark of favor” echoing Flavius’ reference to the absence of the “sign / Of your profession” in the opening words of the play. Brutus rues the necessity of such disguise, required protection even in the dark.

O conspiracy,
 Sham’st thou to show thy dang’rous brow by night,
 When evils are most free? O, then by day
 Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
 To mask thy monstrous visage?

(II. i. 77-81)

What is the problem? Is Brutus solely concerned with detection? For Brutus, shame seems to reside in resigning self-control in favor of group will in ritual or conspiracy.

For Brutus and stoical Portia at least, self-control is the highest human achievement in its pristine individuality. On crowds it is lost. Mass will then rule. In this very scene Cato’s daughter warns her husband not “to dare the vile contagion of the night” (II. i. 265). She tells Brutus he suffers from a mental disorder, and she suspects it concerns the fellow

conspirators, “Some six or seven, who did hide their faces / Even from darkness” (II i. 277). Contagion, plague, all catching sicknesses, become in the play metaphors both for dissolving identity in a crowd and for a crowd’s regaining health by destroying a human victim, that is losing deathly sickness by passing it on. Thus at the end of this long scene, Caius Ligarius can “discard” his illness, only if someone picks up his discard. Sick men become whole by means of “some whole that we must make sick” (II i. 328). This aristocratic crowd seems to be on its way to perform human sacrifice, but it could be a lynch-mob.

As the plebeians were setting out to an abortive ritual on the Lupercal, a month later, on the Ides of March, the conspirators set off to a ritual sacrifice of Caesar that fails. Brutus urges the conspirators to remain unmoved in ceremonial “dismemberment” of Caesar:

Let's be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.
 We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,
 And in the spirit of men there is no blood.
 O that we then could come by Caesar's spirit
 And not dismember Caesar! But, alas,
 Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,
 Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
 Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,
 Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.

(II i. 166-174)

Brutus here specifically calls for what he later fears Antony will see as the “savage spectacle” (III i. 223) of ritual human sacrifice. And although in his exhortation he seems to wish Caesar had no blood, he will need that blood for his ceremony. When Caesar has been murdered, he will call for a symbolic wash:

Stoop, Romans, stoop,
 And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood
 Up to the elbows and besmear our swords.

(III i. 105-107)

Certainly Brutus does not intend to terrify the citizens, as Cassius may take it, but to show them that the murder was unanimously approved and properly performed and therefore, in a sense, a guiltless ritual, all in the name of “Peace, freedom, and liberty!” (III i. 110) Peace will always be restored when such a ceremonial sacrifice—human, animal, or vegetable—includes all. As Brutus puts it, “we shall be called purgers, not murderers” (II i. 180).

This proposed human sacrifice fails and tragically becomes just

another in a long line of collective murders because it lacks “general” sanction, notably among Caesar’s faction that includes generals, Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus, but also among the citizens themselves—the general mass of people. At the end of this act, Shakespeare presents a gruesome parody of the assassination of Caesar in the destruction of Cinna the poet by a pro-Caesar crowd of citizens. And so the reader returns to a picture of a massive force of plebeians—the “blocks,” the “stones” of Rome—in action.

In general, critics have pictured the sacrificial imagery of Brutus as well as that of Mark Antony as conscious—even rational—political gesturing, but I think the inclusion of the parallel assassination of Cinna in the play inevitably calls our attention to the unconscious and irrational in such activity.⁶ For example, the plebeians find absurd reasons for destroying the wrong Cinna. The ostensible object of the questioning, Cinna the Poet’s dwelling, his marital status, and profession, are all immaterial. The group has made note of his name, and he must die. Says the first plebeian after his true, and politically benign, identity is revealed, “It is no matter; his name’s Cinna! Pluck but his name out of his heart” (III. iii. 33). Innocent hearts carry guilt well.

In using arbitrary excuses for destroying Cinna, the plebeians echo Brutus’ consciously irrational prosecution of Caesar in soliloquy (II. i. 10). Brutus knew he was mentally trying his friend and general for crimes that he had not committed:

And to speak truth of Caesar,
I have not known when his affections swayed
More than his reason. . . .

(II. i. 19-21)

His peremptory procedure of condemnation finds utterance in his denunciation of the crime of “ambition” in his speech to the commoners, and the term is snapped up by Antony in his most effective sarcasm. No character lacks ambition, as Antony implies, nor can it be measured. Hugh Richmond once said about Brutus’ mental prosecution of Caesar that “No system of justice has ever yet succeeded in effectively evaluating criminal intent;” here we are not faced with systems of justice, but with a mechanism that exists prior to law and survives only in the absence of superior law of courts and police and international restraint.⁷ It works by “savage” necessity, squelching all sympathy for a “notable” victim. So Brutus remarks, “As fire drives out fire, so pity, pity” (III. i. 171). Group violence focuses on the person who is most visible for any sort of reason, for his race, his disability, or, here, the name of the poet, ironically

a friend to Caesar, and its accidental identity with the name of a conspirator. In collective murder, “reasons” are never sufficient.

As so often, Shakespeare draws a laugh in an otherwise grisly scene of destruction, here, when the Fourth Plebeian repeats “Tear him for his bad verses” (III. iii. 30)! The poet, especially the dramatic poet, subjects himself to being “torn” by his audience, that crowd, often unanimous in its negative or positive response, perhaps in the Globe Theatre at the moment of reception of a newly staged version of *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*. We are reminded of the poet’s sometime fate late in the play in another comic moment when the intrusive peacemaker, the “cynic” poet, is rudely dismissed by Brutus with “what should the wars do with these jiggling fools? / Companion, hence” (IV. iii. 137-138)! The wars have a great deal to do with jiggling fools, like our dramatist-poet, after they happen. Behold the circumstance of our play in a modern language, a circumstance suggested by Cassius’ oddly sanguine rhetorical question:

How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

(III. i. 111-113)

Therefore the cynic poet’s exclusion seems unfair as well. Suffering the fate of the self-appointed policeman, he too is assaulted and torn for his bad verse.

Just as a poet like Cinna can become the arbitrary focus of an angry crowd, so can an aging ruler, suffering perhaps from infertility, deaf in one ear, experiencing a sequence of attacks of “falling sickness,” a “divine” ailment he metaphorically passes on to his murderers. While Caesar may or may not plan to destroy senatorial power, as ruling consul he inevitably exposes himself to destruction for the good of all in times of strife. Like the North Star to which he pompously likens himself, he enjoys ultimate visibility, as Brutus does in the opening scene of Act V, when he suggests he would commit suicide to avoid being led in triumph. Performance of the ritual “play” of victory of the triumph and its unanimous applause was our point of departure in *Julius Caesar*, revealing that a rhythm of assassination, vendetta, and emulation precedes the very action of this drama.

From the first moment of this play, on the occasion of the celebration of Caesar’s victory over Pompey’s sons, the audience is treated to the cycles of Roman internecine destruction of political leaders, the group murder of its titular hero constituting only a moment

in the play's pattern of strife. Shakespeare's audience knows that Brutus is wrong before the battle of Philippi when he states "this same day / Must end the work the ides of March began" (V. i. 112-113). Brutus wants his own human self-sacrifice to contain all the awful violence, but the Elizabethan audience knows that Caesar's murder did not begin a new process. If one argued that the murder of Caesar set in motion the violence that follows for nearly three full acts, one could answer that the assassination of Pompey in Egypt immediately set in motion that violence. The memory of murdered Pompey never goes unmentioned in *Julius Caesar* for long, and his violent end is the point of departure of our play's action.

Pompey's career is specifically identified with that Caesar in the bleeding statue—which suggests the folklore of unsatisfied revenge or bad blood—and with that of Cassius, the hatcher of the plot to kill Caesar, in his being "[As Pompey was]. . .compelled to set / Upon one battle all our liberties" (V. i. 74-75). To maintain the connection between the assassination of Caesar and that of Pompey, Pompey's porch or theater is mentioned as the location of the conspirators' first meeting place no less than three times in twenty-seven lines (I. iii. 126-152). Shakespeare's audience knew that the sequence of political murders in Rome, which began nearly a century before Pompey's death with the senatorial group murder of the tribune Tiberius Gracchus, continued up until the suicide of Cleopatra and Antony.⁸

As in the case of Pompey's death, violence never contains itself in the ritual death of Julius Caesar. "Bad blood" augments vendetta arithmetically until, in the play, we seem to be concerned only with numbers. When Messala reports that "Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus / Have put to death an hundred senators," (IV. iii. 174) an impassive Brutus replies, "Therein our letters do not well agree. / Mine speak of seventy senators that died / By their proscriptions, Cicero being one." Brutus seems distracted here as he is when Portia's suicide by swallowing fire is reported to him on two separate occasions. We assume he is not himself, not well in health. As Portia herself puts it to Lucius, he went "sickly forth" (II. iv. 14) to the capitol on the Ides of March. Whom did he become but a Caesar among Caesars, as the cobbler became a tribune among tribunes? Brutus becomes part of the conspiracy by a process of emulation on which Cassius consciously capitalizes.

From the first, "poor Brutus, with himself at war", (I. ii. 45) is aware of a violent internal disruption, later describing his soul as "a little kingdom" suffering the "nature of insurrection" (II. i. 68). But he does not understand his internal political disorder, nor that his soul is mirroring

the uprising and levelling about to occur in Rome. He employs a mirror image with Cassius who gradually attempts to “inspire” him with desire to imitate Caesar. To Cassius’ “can you see your face?” (I. ii. 51), Brutus says, “No, Cassius; for the eye sees not itself / But by reflection, by some other things.” If we leave out his ultimate qualification in this observation, we have a clear metaphor for one way of gaining self-knowledge. We see our own character in the reactions (mirror) to it. But “by some other things” is a puzzling addendum, as it suggests the possibility that one could imitate others. Cassius capitalizes on Brutus’ “reflection” metaphor, proposing a sequence of possible mirror images for Brutus, from the Roman in general, to Cassius himself, climaxing with Caesar.

First he points out that “many of the best respect in Rome / . . . Have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes” (I. ii. 59). Cassius suggests that these people have hoped he were not blind, but also that they have desired that Brutus identify with them: They have hoped that Brutus would see only through their eyes and understand problems that existed in Rome the way they did. When Brutus complains “That you would have me seek into myself / For that which is not in me” (I. ii. 64-65), Cassius is now ready to refer to the “other thing,” to Caesar. Caesar the emperor still may be “outside” Brutus, but not for long. Cassius now suggests that Brutus consider himself (Cassius) as Brutus’ mirror. Only half in jest, he remarks:

Therefore, good Brutus, be prepared to hear;
And since you know you cannot see yourself
So well as by reflection, I, your glass,
Will modestly discover to yourself
That of yourself which you yet know not of.

(I. ii. 66-70)

Cassius’ apparent admission that he is manipulating Brutus and his use of “therefore” to begin his “answer” have perplexed editors and directors alike, who tend to transform Brutus’ complaint into an aside. But Cassius and Brutus are not uniformly attentive to others’ words. “Therefore” seems merely a “logical” term licensing Cassius to continue his emotional appeal for emulation of Caesar.

Directors can cast Cassius as a villain here, with leering asides, mesmerizing noble Brutus, and when he is alone delivering with false self-deprecation his plan to forge letters to get more than a little fire from Brutus, but such procedures would belie the sympathetic lieutenant to Brutus of Act V. The final act discovers to us a man of high intellect who refuses to resist morally what he has decided is the sole, immutable law

of human nature, the law of inexorable rivalry, factional strife, and conspiracy—that is, mutability. And Shakespeare lends him a tragic death that ironically reflects his obsession. Overlooking the battle of Philippi, he is presented to us as witnessing his friend Titinius surrounded by friends and given the wreath of victory.

With Pindarus' help, however, he mistakes a happy reunion for the slaughter of his comrade at the hands of a group of hostile cavalry. With truly "thick" (V. iii. 21) vision, Cassius can "picture" only worlds of conscious rivalry and collective murder. In his initial attempt to enlist Brutus in the first act, we see a believer seeking, somewhat underhandedly, a convert. But how else does one cause human conversion? Profoundly cynical, Cassius lacks Brutus' idealism, yet it is that idealism which keeps Brutus from narrowly analyzing the dangers of internal and external disorder.

Cassius moves with Brutus on to a narration of a double-dare with Caesar, where, in part because of Caesar's falling sickness, Cassius is victor.

For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me, 'Dar'st thou, Cassius, now
Leap in with me into this angry flood
And swim to yonder point?' Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow. So indeed he did.
The torrent roared, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy.

(I. ii. 100-110)

Cassius, in his "will-less" and instantaneous response to Caesar's dare, as well as his head start, has plunged into a symbolic flood of envy and emulation of which he is fully aware.

Thus, with consummate oratorical skill, Cassius leads Brutus into contemplation of like emulation of Caesar. If he succeeds, Brutus will gradually lose himself, and his difference from his friend and rival, Caesar. His "mettle may be wrought / From that it is disposed" (I. ii. 306-307), and he will be at one with the conspiracy, as well as a mirror of Caesar. His metal will have melted into a common pool.⁹ Cassius takes pains to tell Brutus that he is "modest" rhetorical mirror here as they part when he says "I am glad / That my weak words have struck but thus much show / Of fire from Brutus" (I. ii. 175), but Shakespeare lends his monosyllabic words an emphatic Senecan amble:¹⁰

'Brutus,' and 'Caesar.' What should be in that 'Caesar'?
 Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
 Write them together: yours is as fair a name.
 Sound them: it doth become the mouth as well.
 Weigh them: it is as heavy. Conjure with 'em:
 'Brutus' will start a spirit as soon as 'Caesar.'

(I. ii. 142-147)

Clearly, Cassius is not asking Brutus to be a co-conspirator but a dictator of the conspiracy, a Caesar of the senatorial party, a role he adopts.

Brutus seems unaware that he is mirroring Julius Caesar even at the moment that he performs the same grandstand rhetorical act.¹¹ At the end of his great speech to the commoners from the pulpit he says, with Sophoclean irony, "I have the same dagger for myself when it shall please my country to need my death" (III. ii. 44-46). Such will soon be the case at Philippi. These words forcibly recall Caesar's speech and action after his fainting spell at the Lupercal. In Casca's rough words, Caesar "plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his throat to cut" (I. ii. 262-63).

The identity of the two actions is not lost on the plebeians. Their response is:

All Live, Brutus! live, live!

1. Plebeian. Bring him with triumph home unto his house.
2. Plebeian. Give him a statue with his ancestors.
3. Plebeian. Let him be Caesar.
4. Plebeian. Caesar's better parts
 Shall be crowned in Brutus.

(III. ii. 47-51)

Mention of crowning, the occasion of Caesar's offer of self-sacrifice, underlines the ironic simplicity of the proposed identification. Response among the crowd of citizens to both republican gestures—Caesar's refusal of the crown and Brutus' panegyric of political freedom—is uniformly "monarchic," but such a quality is not unknown to the senators.

Brutus has become the new Caesar for the moment, dictating like Caesar what is often unfortunate policy to Cassius and the other conspirators, who "grace his heels" (III. i. 120), like the "throng" that followed "Caesar at the heels" (II. iv. 34). Ordering Mark Antony be spared and troops be committed at Philippi over Cassius' sound objections that these actions are unsafe resembles Caesar's intransigent manner in dealing with the requests of his wife, or the soothsayer, or Artemidorus. Brutus comes, furthermore, to sound very much like Caesar

in self-praise. Responding to what he calls Cassius' "threats," he says,

I am armed so strong in honesty
That they pass by me as the idle wind,
Which I respect not.

(IV. iii. 67-69)

Like Caesar, he refers to himself in the third person in demanding ill-earned money from Cassius to pay his troops:

When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous
To lock such rascal counters from his friends,
Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts,
Dash him to pieces!

(IV. iii. 79-82)

Like Caesar, he pictures himself as a direct object of the gods' interests, a center of attention of the "heavens." Yet Brutus fails to recognize the similarity. Before the battle of Philippi, Caesar's ghost introduces himself as "thy evil spirit, Brutus" (IV. iii. 282). Without reference to the content of this statement, Brutus simply asks, "Why com'st thou?" The suggestion that Caesar's ghost might be his own evil spirit—that his identity is one with Caesar's—does not puzzle him perhaps because he is not fully aware of what has been said.

In Elizabethan revenge tragedy, the ghost of the prior victim may appear not in front of his murderer, like Macbeth, but strictly in front of his avenger, like Hamlet. Caesar's ghost appears to both in the same person. Brutus will simultaneously become Caesar's avenger and his punished murderer in his own suicide—and by the same sword. His identity here with Caesar will be final and complete. The man who sacrificed Caesar will be sacrificed as the man who sacrificed Pompey was sacrificed. After his death, Antony's priestly glorification of the victim as the "noblest Roman of them all. . . This was a man!" (V. v. 68, 75) will closely follow his remarks on Caesar's death: "The most noble blood of all this world" (III. i. 156). "Noble Caesar. . . Here was a Caesar! When comes such another" (III. ii. 184, 252)? In neither case, however, will Antony's oration lead to the peace that comes with unambiguous funeral as the eventual rise of Sextus Pompeius in Antony and Cleopatra witnesses. "Bad blood" again has been spilt even by self-slaughter, and Antony's Orphic delivery can only "move / The stones of Rome" (III. ii. 229-30)—unbeknownst to him in this case—to more violence. In his elegy to Brutus, Antony absolves him of "envy" (V. v. 70), and I believe he is correct. Artemidorus knows that Caesar died in the

“teeth of emulation” (II. iii. 14), emulation that in Brutus’ case was unconscious. Brutus knew he was not well, but he did not know why. His illness remained undiagnosed. Caesar’s image remains in Brutus’ spirit for good and for evil, yet Caesar had priority. He was the unwavering model for emulation in a society sick with turmoil, as well as the human victim of would-be sacrificial knives.

Typically, Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* develops several sorts of schematic parallels, around the major speeches, around the philosophical divergence of Epicurean and Stoic, around similar scenes such as Brutus’ debate with Portia and Caesar’s with Calpurnia, or the two group murders. One theme he illuminates is human sacrifice. He paints a picture of rivalry, not of the comic or healing, but of the diseased sort that culminates in an absence of rule in the Roman streets and in the theaters and porches and steps frequented by the aristocracy. He also paints a picture of group-forming that is not cooperative or “pastoral” or even ritualistic, but irrational and violent, the central event being the destruction of Caesar, whose great powers in the state, as well as his physical disabilities, set him off and made him a center of attention. Caesar’s own words confirm his place or “ordinance” in this volatile political situation. Only Caesar knows, in his intransigent way, that he is

the Northern Star,
Of whose true-fixed and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament

(III. i. 60-62)

while the conspirators, as Thomas Rymer once sardonically pointed out, “have no more in their heads than to wrangle about which is the East and West” when they come in conference:¹²

Decius. Here lies the east. Doth not the day break here?
Casca. No.
Cinna. O, pardon, sir, it doth; and yon grey lines
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.
Casca. You shall confess that you are both deceived.
Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises. . . .

(II. i. 101-105)

Yet Caesar’s flattery, self-flattery, and his ensuing disregard for his special place and his own imperative safety mark a disability of rule that mock even some of his last words: “These couchings and these lowly courtesies. . . turn preordinance and first decree / Into the lane of children”

(III. i. 36-39). Deriding the kneeling senators' arranged appeal for the freedom of Publius Cimber—"Doth not Brutus bootless kneel?" (III. i. 75)—Caesar is stabbed by Casca, who calls for the end of all words: "Speak hands for me." As when the plebeians tear apart Cinna for his bad verses, Casca calls for the end of signifiers. Indeed he might, words making distinctions that no longer exist in the final stage of tragic disintegration.

Loyola University

Notes

¹Originally published in *PMLA*, 66 (1951), 765-774, Sterling revised the paper into a chapter of *Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1956), pp. 40-54, and it appears in *toto* in Leonard F. Dean, ed., *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Julius Caesar* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 39-56. I quote from the last edition, on p. 40. I would like to thank Stephen Greenblatt, René Girard, and Norman Rabkin for valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

²Philosophical, anthropological, and psychoanalytic interpretations of the play, for example, tend to emphasize the sacrificial theme but with little unanimity on its significance. Kenneth Burke early noted that the play concerns sacrificial crisis in "Antony in Behalf of the Play" in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Univ. Press, 1941), pp. 329-43. Norman Holland identifies occult references to Christian archetypes in "The 'Cinna' and 'Cynicke' Episodes in *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 11, (1960), 439-44. Peter S. Anderson in "Shakespeare's Caesar: The Language of Sacrifice," *Comparative Drama*, 3 (1969), 3-26 examines sacrificial displacement in terms, on the whole, of Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology. Henry Ebel in "Caesar's Wounds: A Study of William Shakespeare," *Psychoanalytic Review*, 62 (1975), 107-30, analyzes the work in terms of Freud's anthropological theories expounded in *Moses and Monotheism* (*Totem and Taboo* reiterates this material). While both essays provide lucid ethological studies of Shakespeare's versions of sacrifice in *Julius Caesar*, the connection between rivalry and group violence remains obscure, in part, because both critics take Shakespeare's Caesar to be Brutus' father; this is Plutarch and Suetonius, not Shakespeare. Ralph Berry points out in "*Julius Caesar*: A Roman Tragedy," *Dalhousie Review*, 61 (1981), 325, that "Shakespeare makes no use of the tradition that Brutus was Caesar's son—if anything, he preserves the suggestion of a son role for Antony (III. i. 22)." Lynn de Gerenday's intelligent article, "Play, Ritualization, and Ambivalence in *Julius Caesar*," *Literature and Psychology*, 24 (1974), 24-34, generally argues for "Freudian" ambivalence in the play's major figures and their speeches. More recently, Naomi Conn Liebler, in "Thou Bleeding Piece of Earth: The Ritual Ground of *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 14 (1981), 175-196, argues that Shakespeare's incorporation of "Saturnalian" ritual imagery in the play, originally found in Plutarch's "Life of Romulus," is meant to reinforce for Shakespeare's audience the theme of decay of Roman custom through the crass politicization of traditional rites, rites similar to those found, for example, in Warwickshire in the sixteenth century. David Kaula, in "Let Us Be Sacrificers: Religious Motifs in *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 14 (1981), 197-214,

argues that ritual imagery in the play creates for Shakespeare's audience a version of the troubled contemporary world of Christianity, notably the polarization of Puritan and Papist. Both Liebler and Kaula elucidate legitimate historical and ethnic themes in the play, Roman and English. I choose to restrict my inquiry to the play's definition of the sacrificial process, its ethos. Liebler's discovery of the influence of Plutarch's first Roman life reminds us that the eternal city in Roman myth (like the first city in *Genesis*) was founded by a fratricide who was also a marked man. Plutarch's "Romulus" revolves around the general problem of violent rivalry and civil disturbance as well as ethnic themes.

³*The Imperial Theme* (London: Methuen, 1931), in the chapter, "The Eroticism of Julius Caesar," pp. 62-95.

⁴All quotations taken from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969).

⁵The Lupercal is a Saturnalian holy day. On the Lupercal, as Liebler points out, "Rome's most ancient festival of purgation and fertility," ("Thou Bleeding Piece of Earth"), "Lupercians which come about the citty, doe also sacrifice a dogge," (Thomas North, trans., *Plutarch's Lives*, ed. W.E. Henley and George Windham, 6 vols. [London: David Nut, 1895], vol. 1, p. 99). While North's Plutarch goes on to suggest that the dog is an enemy to the wolf, or, indeed, to the naked runners, I would guess the dog is a version of the wolf and, by extension, of Mars, the Roman wolf-god. Liebler, in "Thou Bleeding Piece of Earth," p. 183, says about a goat sacrifice and the dabbing of two boys' heads with the blood: "But the cutting up of the sacrificial pharmakos, whose blood is smeared upon the flesh of the priestly celebrants, is one of the central events in the rites of the Lupercalia." Although Caesar no doubt includes these rites when he says "leave no ceremony out" (I. ii. 11), Lupercalian sacrifice is unmentioned in the play, though the smearing of blood forcibly reminds us of the aftermath of the "sacrifice" of Caesar.

⁶See Hugh Richmond, *Shakespeare's Political Plays* (New York: Random, 1967), David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), and Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: Free Press, 1967).

⁷*Shakespeare's Political Plays*, p. 207.

⁸See Hugh Richmond, "Shakespeare's Roman Trilogy: The Climax in *Cymbeline*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, 5 (1972), 129-40.

⁹A fund of images, metaphors and quibbles in the play suggest dissolving identity in both patrician and plebeian party. By means of homonymic and metathetic connection, the "mettle" or "metal" of human identity (including Metellus') is pictured as "melting" when panic or other collective human response occurs. For example, as soon as the commoners leave, Flavius remarks, "See, wher their basest mettle be not moved" (I. i. 61). Loss of identity is brought about by "that which melteth fools—I mean, sweet words" (III. i. 42). Metellus, a minor character, appears by name in the text an extraordinary number of times (13) as if to echo words, even when he is speaking his few lines: "Metellus Cimber throws before thy seat / An humble heart" (III. i. 34-35). Perhaps the cobbler may be seen as introducing such word play when he defiantly claims, "I meddle with no tradesman's matters" (I. i. 21).

¹⁰The speech also echoes one of Juliet's most powerful soliloquies (*Romeo and Juliet*, II. ii. 38).

¹¹Imitation of Caesar by Brutus is discussed in David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, p. 249. "Although Brutus searches his motives for the deed [the murder], he never begins to suspect the extent to which he resembles Caesar." Also Norman Rabkin,

“Common Characteristics of Brutus and Caesar,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 63 (1964), 240-54: “the Audience should be troubled by a sense of *deja vu*” (p. 241), in reference to II.ii.

¹²Curt A. Zimansky, ed., *The Critical Works of Thomas Rymer* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956), p. 168.

“O Scotland, Scotland”: The Anti-Heroic Play of *Macbeth* by David L. Pollard

Willard Farnham has made a case for placing Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, not as it usually is, among the other major tragedies, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*, but with plays like *Timon of Athens*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*—that is, at Shakespeare's tragic frontier. In these latter plays the dramatist commingles taints and honors in the central characters so much—he endows them with such vitiating flaws—that unlike figures of heroic grandeur, they require no “villains to help in the work of (their) entanglement.”¹ Hence they become embroiled in no struggle with “mighty opposites” as we see with *Othello* and *Iago* and *Hamlet* and *Claudius*. These works, coming as they do after the great tragedies, constitute a departure into a dramatic consideration of a more brittle and more delimited image of man.

As a matter of fact, *Macbeth* has been widely criticized because in it Shakespeare presents only two characters, *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, who engage our attention. John Russell Brown notes how “unusual” it is in the tragedies for Shakespeare so to restrict his “customary interest in supporting characters. . . .”² More specifically, Norman Rabkin states that the character “Malcolm is a terrible crux” and that Malcolm's big moment, the lengthy scene in the English court, is “curious.”³ Many have complained that the exciting opening acts give way, excepting the sleep-walking scene, to a naïve narrative manner in the later acts. And long ago Mark Van Doren expressed discontent with *Macbeth* himself: he is “less valuable as a person than *Hamlet*, *Othello*, or *Lear*, or *Antony*, or *Coriolanus*, or *Timon*.”⁴ I don't know whether it is possible to answer these criticisms and queries. It is legitimate, however, to use them as a motivation to reinvestigate what in the play occasions them.

Samuel Johnson's pronouncements on *Macbeth* are universally known:

This play. . . has no nice discriminations of character, the events are too great to admit the influence of particular dispositions, and the course of the action necessarily determines the conduct of the agents. . . .The danger of ambition is well described. . . .⁵

However much more *Macbeth* is, I think Johnson is right to assert that the play is didactic—“The danger of ambition is well described.” *Macbeth*'s

ambition propels him to make a prodigious intrusion into the history of legitimate royal succession. Despite the enormity of his efforts to impose his will on events, he is never more than a monarch dressed in “borrowed robes” and his reign is shown to be a temporary aberration which, for a ghastly interim, interrupts the inevitable flow—the rightful heir in the end succeeds his rightful predecessor. And that there are few or no “nice discriminations of character,” in Johnson’s perceptive phrasing, may be a major manifestation of how this play makes its political point.

Before turning to the play, let me briefly allude to another kind of politically didactic work. *A Mirror for Magistrates* is one of the most curious and noteworthy achievements of the Elizabethan imagination; first published in the 1550’s, it went through eight editions and maintained a lively popularity until as late as the time of the composition of *Macbeth* in the first decade of the seventeenth century. The *Mirror* in its final scope consisted of numerous tragedies, in the form of narrative poems which tell of the woeful misfortunes which befell historical figures, due largely to the misuses or abuses of political power. The *Mirror*’s editor of the 1559 edition, William Baldwin, addresses a diplomatic but pointed preface to the English nobility in which he announces the theologized political philosophy which the tragedies to follow are meant to illustrate. “Well is that realm governed in which the ambitious desire not to bear office.” Baldwin defines the ambitious indiscriminately as “prowlers for power or gain who seek not for offices to help other(s) for which cause offices are ordained, but with the undoing of other(s) to prank up themselves.” Since his theme is this kind of deviance, only sketchily does the editor suggest the character of the good magistrate, though he assures his readers that “where offices are duly minist’red, cannot be chosen but the people are good, whereof must needs follow a good commonweal.” Baldwin goes on to suggest how God, “the ordainer of offices,” calls magistrates who enact on earth divine justice “gods.” Turning directly to his readers, Baldwin exclaims: “Ye be all gods, as many as have in your charge any administration of justice. What a foul shame were it for any now to take upon them the name and office of God and in their doings to shew themselves divels! God cannot, of justice, but plague such shameless presumption and hypocrisy, and that with shameful death, diseases, or infamy.” The poems of *A Mirror for Magistrates* comprise a kind of “looking-glass” in which “you shall see (if any vice be in you) how the like hath been punished in others heretofore. . . .”⁶

By the time Shakespeare was writing *Macbeth*, these political ideas couldn’t have been more conservative and orthodox. But, then, *Macbeth*

is a very conservative work ideologically; indeed, the play is itself *A Mirror of Magistrates* in dramatic form and as such, it reveals Shakespeare retrieving and “recycling” concepts the *Mirror* was devised to exemplify. The subject of *Macbeth* is the good commonweal, or rather, as the play says, the “sickly weal” whose citizenry travails to make whole. Clearly Macbeth is the ambitious leader who prowls for power and gain and with the undoing of others seeks to prank himself up. In the course of his political life, Macbeth comes to show himself a devil—he is called “devilish Macbeth” and his queen “fiendlike.” Consequently, Macbeth’s “shameless presumption and hypocrisy” finally lead to his shameful death and infamy. Figures like Duncan, Malcolm and Edward the Confessor stand as types of good magistrate, and Macbeth, again, himself the type of the ambitious tyrant.

Shakespeare creates the image of a commonweal in *Macbeth* by introducing a succession of “little people” whose variety of functions gives the impression of societal density. Nowhere in Shakespearean tragedy do we find so much anonymity. Numerous characters, only briefly known and without names, flit by. An anonymous sergeant informs Duncan of the success of his generals; there is the famous porter, without a name, who answers the knocking at the gate; a nameless wise old man comments on the wildness of the night when Duncan is murdered. Anonymous murderers are employed to assassinate Banquo. Macduff’s son is without a name. To these can be added the conscientious messenger who warns Lady Macduff of impending danger; and the doctor and waiting women who attend upon Lady Macbeth. Here we note that both Lady Macduff and, remarkably, Lady Macbeth, herself, have no names separate from their husbands’. Finally, there is that group of nearly anonymous figures, Donalbain, Fleance, Ross, Lennox and so forth, with no marked personalities, who nevertheless play essential parts.

When Johnson says that “this play...has no nice discriminations of character,” I trust that he has in mind, however, figures like Duncan and Malcolm, Banquo and Macduff. Now the fact is that they are in varying degrees flat, and not well-rounded, characters. But, far from being a flaw in the play—a sign of hasty or slipshod craftsmanship on Shakespeare’s part—this absence of full charismatic personality only points to how the dramatist’s *Mirror for Magistrates* reflects its images of ordinary, unremarkable and unheroic humankind—the stuff of a commonweal. Indeed, the disposition of the plot of the play indicates that we are to see these two pairs, King Duncan and his son Malcolm, and the thanes Banquo and Macduff, as somewhat interchangeable. Duncan and

Banquo are prominent in the first half of the play, but by the middle, both are dead, victims of Macbeth. On the other hand, Malcom and Macduff are, so to speak, "held in reserve" until the second half when they emerge as avenging leaders. In other words, Malcolm takes his father's place, as does Macduff, Banquo's. These characters appear more or less sequentially, suggesting a kind of procession of life which Macbeth is unable to eradicate. But, again, as personalities, they are made to appear limited and incomplete.

Taken as a political tragedy, *Macbeth* dramatizes what happens when the attributes of ideal royalty become divided and opposed to each other in different persons. Contrasted with his gentle-hearted monarch, Macbeth, for instance, is warlike vigor incarnate. There is the bloody sergeant's depiction of Macbeth on the battlefield fighting the king's adversary in I. ii:

The merciless Macdonwald—
 Worthy to be a rebel . . . from the western isles
 Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
 And fortune, in his damned quarrel smiling,
 Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak: For brave
 Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
 Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
 Which smoked with bloody execution.
 Like valour's minion carved out his passage
 Till he faced the slave;
 Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
 Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
 And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

This occurs before we have met Macbeth; even so, he has already had his finest hour. It is significant that Macbeth's heroic militarism is presented in the form of epical narrative. Macbeth resembles an Homeric figure and this description an episode out of *The Iliad*. He comes complete with heroic epithets: "brave Macbeth," "Valour's minion," and later "Bellona's bridegroom." In the early scenes, there is at work a sort of Homeric ethic—an ethic of kudos or martial honor; and as Macbeth knows, the grateful Duncan is prepared to dress him in "gold opinions." Macbeth's is an invaluable, if subordinate, role in the commonweal.

The great political crisis of Scotland comes about when the grand heroic defender of the state changes place with its adversaries, when he becomes an immeasurably more menacing figure than the "merciless Macdonwald" and the Thane of Cawdor, and there stands forth no new champion of the state worthy to be his foe. And this is what happens. Macbeth's wilful transposition of roles creates a void. In his stead remain

a crowd of individuals only too humanly marked by their “naked Frailties.”

Macbeth's heroic valor is complemented by an undeniable moral greatness. As he approaches horrific insubordination, the assassination of his king, Macbeth sees with utmost clarity the inevitable results of his actions: loss of peace in this life (“Macbeth hath murdered sleep”) and the forfeit of his soul, his “eternal jewel to the common enemy of man.” Shakespeare renders Macbeth's moral agony with a compassion that compels us all to deeply sympathetic responses.

I would not for a moment downplay or dismiss the fact, and it is a fact, that Macbeth is incomparably the most charismatic and impressive figure in his world. Robert Heilman has written brilliantly on how Shakespeare galvanizes and sustains our sympathies for this most human of heroes-turned-criminals. My concern is the other side of the coin. Shakespeare evokes a divided loyalty in his audience between an individual and his society. And it is the gradual debasement of Macbeth as an heroic figure that creates this division. “Valour's minion” ranges through his world turning his marital valor against all levels—from king to child—with ever hardening resolve.

In abandoning the role of worthy thane, Macbeth is driven to the ignominious assumption of numerous disguises and impersonations. In I. ii., when receiving the news that he is the new thane of Cawdor, Macbeth asks: “Why do you dress me / In borrow'd robes?” Ironically, these robes are truly his, to the point of complete identification; he takes on the identity of that traitorous thane as well as his title. Henceforth we watch him assume false face and strange garments.

Macbeth develops the habit of repeating his disguises. He arranges the murderers of both Duncan and Banquo to coincide with banquets in their honor, thereby mocking the time with a mask of gracious hospitality. In reference to both murders, he plays the part of the outraged and solicitous sympathizer. He feigns a “violent love” as provocation to kill the royal chamberlains, falsely accused of Duncan's death. He claims a common bond with the murders of Banquo: “Both of you / Know Banquo was your enemy. . . So is he mine. . .” Macbeth even tries in the final battle to impersonate his former heroic self and strike terror in young Siward by the pronouncement of his name: “My name's Macbeth. . . (none) more fearful. . . Siward: ‘Thou liest, abhorred tyrant’ . . .” Finally, he unwittingly reduplicates the figure and actions of the rebellious Macdonwald—fighting Irish mercenaries, “kerns”, by his side, and suffering the same deserved fate—death and beheading at the hands of a loyal thane. No wonder Macbeth concludes that Life itself is

an unreal impersonation—"a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage."

The inner life of Macbeth is, correspondingly, beset with all sorts of demeaning emotions and deprivations. Macbeth never enjoys the energizing exhilaration which villain-heroes like Richard III and Iago derive from their improvised wickedness. Rather he enters upon his life of crime with morbid reluctance, and once into it is wracked with fears and "terrible dreams" and "saucy doubts." Moreover, most unheroically, Macbeth descends to envy and contempt of others. Fearing Banquo's "royalty of nature" and envious of Banquo's ability to remain unmoved by the witches' prophecies, Macbeth begrudges him his destiny as the father to a line of kings. He expresses contempt for the "boy" Malcolm.

Macbeth turns into the loneliest of men, which development dismays his increasingly alienated wife. In his solitude he gives way to paranoid suspicions; he comes to rely on spies and "fee'd" servants in every house. In addition, Macbeth is denied two consolations granted Shakespeare's other heroes. Hamlet, Lear, and Othello all continue to experience love until their deaths. Not Macbeth. He greets the word of Lady Macbeth's passing with fatigued indifference: "She should have died hereafter. . . ." And secondly, Shakespeare's other heroes receive as Sophoclean compensation some final illumination that human goodness is real or that "there's a divinity that shapes (their) ends / rough-hew them how (they) will. . . ." Such illumination is denied Macbeth. Macbeth's famous nihilism ("life is a tale told by an idiot") stands as self-deception refuted by the closing events of the play. To draw a conclusion, all of his compulsive outward behavior and his tortured inner life certainly make Macbeth intensely moving. But they express as well how divine retributive justice reduces the aberrant great man.

This brings us back at last to the commonweal nearly anonymous and the last movement of the play, commencing with the lengthy scene in the English court, IV. iii. This scene is masterly in the many functions it performs simultaneously. Its main action is the cementing of a bond between Malcolm and Macduff. They stand before us as virtual unknowns; and the little that we know marks them as no promising match for Macbeth. Both have taken flight from Scotland, and Macduff bears the ignominy of having abandoned his own family. Even Malcolm mistrusts Macduff. This mistrust leads Malcolm to start an interesting countermovement. To test Macduff's intentions, and to ferret out a potential adversary, Malcolm reveals a wary astuteness his father fatally lacked. He does so bizarrely by borrowing from the manner of Macbeth—by imposture. The imposture achieves several dramatic effects. It allows

us to see what desperate devices the reign of terror has reduced good people to. In addition, when in pretense Malcolm enumerates the vices by which he tops Macbeth—"Boundless intemperance," "stanchless avarice" and a willingness to "Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell," this catalogue in actuality provides an abstract of the widening evils the absent Macbeth is perpetrating in the lengthy period of time that this scene, mirage-like, is meant to represent. Macduff's reaction to Malcolm—"Fit to govern! No, not to live"—is a judgment calculated to structure audience response to Macbeth. Finally, Malcolm sums up his presumed depravity:

the king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them. . . .

Although expressed negatively, this is a list of the attributes of the good magistrate, as the other was of the bad.

In other words, on the English Court scene, the action pauses and the language turns abstract, so that the play can open up and make explicit its homiletic intentions. Throughout this scene, we hear exclamations of generalized grief: "alas, poor country," "O nation miserable," "O Scotland, Scotland!" "Bleed, bleed, poor country!" These lamentations not only serve to swing audience sympathy to a large degree away from Macbeth; they serve also the dramatic function of disclosing fully and at last that the true protagonist—and this surely makes the play *Macbeth* unique among the great tragedies—is not an individual, but a nation. The protagonist of *Macbeth* is the commonweal of Scotland.

It suits Shakespeare's purposes, consequently, never to allow any one character to rival the complex attraction of Macbeth's personality. Shakespeare separates greatness from goodness and invests the latter in a host of decent if rather slight, or slightly known, human beings. Malcolm, therefore is a "crux" only if one insists on expecting Shakespeare's previous tragic formulation. As a foil for Macbeth, Malcolm, with his inexperienced youth and unestablished identity, his modesty and willingness to be led, represents a welcome anti-heroical alternative.

As Malcolm says: "Macbeth / Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above / Put on their instruments." These divine instruments are a mixture of unfamiliar and untested soldiers: "unrough youths that even now / Protest their first of manhood." They answer Macbeth with one final personality-

free imposture. Macbeth's "mighty opposite" takes the borrowed shape of group anonymity: the "moving grove" of Birnam wood. The battle proves to be anti-climactic, for Macbeth's army deserts him and "little is to do." And Macbeth himself is defeated by Macduff, a man distinguished only by the unusualness of his premature birth, his patriotism, and the rightness of his cause.

What excites the modern reader of Shakespeare's play is its poetry, the rich intricacy of its structural design, its exotic and suggestive meta-physical implications, and the psychological brilliance of the portrait of its titular figure. It is good to remind ourselves, however, of the larger purposes, perhaps less interesting to us, which they are made to serve. For all of his magnificence, Macbeth does not escape the identity and fate of a figure in *A Mirror for Magistrates*. In that sense, the play *Macbeth* is an old-fashioned work. A generation before Shakespeare, Sir Philip Sidney had claimed that tragedy was a didactic art form—it "maketh kings to fear to be tyrants."⁷ Clearly, Sir Philip would have admired *Macbeth*. For only here, among the great tragedies, are we compelled, in the end, and with whatever mixed feelings, to side with a corporate entity—Scotland—against the heroic enemy in its midst.

Nazareth College of Rochester

Notes

¹Willard Farnham, *Shakespeare's Tragic Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), p. 8.

²John Russell Brown, *Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth* (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1963), p. 42.

³Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare And The Problem of Meaning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 59 and p. 156.

⁴Mark Van Doren, *Shakespeare* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. 216.

⁵Dr. Samuel Johnson, "Macbeth," *William Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 165. All of my citations from Shakespeare's play derive from this edition.

⁶William Baldwin, cited in *The Renaissance in England*, eds. Hyder E. Rollins and Herschel Baker (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1954), p. 270.

⁷Sir Philip Sidney, "The Defence of Poesy," *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Prose and Poetry*, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1989), p. 129.

Gesture in *Coriolanus*: Textual Cues for Actor and Audience by Paul Gaudet

Among the many instances of intense dramatic impact in Shakespeare's plays is a moment of silence in which a son holds his mother's hand. The gesture itself, as a physical movement, is quite simple. Removed from its context, it would function in a direct and uncomplicated way as a sign of natural filial affection. Yet, within the dramatic context that Shakespeare has crafted in *Coriolanus*, with its particular interplay of structural cues, characters, words, and visual signs, this silent gesture becomes far more. The silence resonates with multiple and conflicting possibilities; a minimal physical action is charged with tension, made to bear the accumulated weight of the whole play. Volumnia, the rest of Coriolanus' family, Rome, Aufidius, the Volscians, and Coriolanus himself are all implicated in this action. Within the narrative of the play, the moment becomes a complex reversal of past and future roles: Coriolanus forgoes his insistent fiction of self-authorship, replacing angry and vocal defiance with a tacit acceptance of life ties; he momentarily puts aside a rigid and militant masculinity; he acknowledges the dependence on his mother against which he has subliminally chafed throughout the play;¹ he relents in his threatened revenge against Rome, an act which simultaneously proves him true to his Roman origins and false to his Volscian alliance; having vehemently resisted instinct, he surrenders to it; having forged a public image in a public world, he implicitly redefines honor as a matter of the heart; in saving others and redeeming his humanity, he confirms his death. In short, Coriolanus' uncharacteristic response contradicts everything that he has sought to affirm about himself and his world. Yet it is not unexpected for an audience. The text has carefully prepared us for this moment by hinting at the fragility and unnaturalness of Coriolanus' self-creating fiction. It has also given a more intense and declarative emphasis to stage gestures as the play approaches the dramatic turn of V. iii.

What is so striking about Shakespeare's method in *Coriolanus* is the extent to which he specifies what he wants his actors to do as cues to how he wants his audience to respond. Although there is still some latitude for actors in the localized details for enacting these gestures, the dramatic impression and significance of the gestures are more circumscribed,

more directed than is Shakespeare's customary practice which is allusive, oblique, and ambiguous. Consider for a moment the numerous occasions of implied gesture and unspecified tone in Shakespearean drama. When Shakespeare has the returning Richard II say, "Dear earth, I do salute thee with my hand" (*Richard II*, III. ii. 6),² some gesture is called for, but its exact form and significance are not prescribed: does Richard remain standing? is he on one knee? on two? what is he doing with his hand or hands? do the gestures indicate that he is facile and insincere? profoundly moved? something in between? Again, how long a silence separates York's announcement of Bolingbroke's designated succession and Bolingbroke's reply, "In God's name I'll ascend the regal throne" (*Richard II*, IV. i. 113)? Are we to read into this moment eager ambition, or "staged" reluctance, or genuine hesitation? What facial signs accompany such moments of articulate silence? When Hal and Poinc spring what they take to be an inescapable trap on Falstaff, "Come, let's hear, Jack, what trick hast thou now?" (*1 Henry IV*, II. iv. 265-66), does Falstaff seem confused, at a loss for "tricks," with shifting eyes desperately searching for a witty evasion until the light visibly dawns in his face? Or does he fix his gaze on Hal and Poinc as a self-satisfied grin rises to his mischievously twinkling eyes, indicating that the trappers have been trapped? What might characters be doing when they are not speaking? As Lorenzo and Jessica speak the twenty-five lines that begin their elopement, do Gratiano and Salerio preserve a mood of romantic charm and dignity through their stillness? Or do their initial cynical comments on human disappointment and the erosions of time extend into ribald gestures that mock the promise of the moment?³ To take a final example from *The Merchant of Venice*, why does Shakespeare have Jessica speak as a final line, "I am never merry when I hear sweet music" (V. i. 69) and then remain silent for 238 lines to the play's end? Do we see her as a fully integrated member of the play's "new" society, or is she both a part of and apart from the rest, a "branded" convert who must live on the fringes of Christian community and a sharer of Antonio's melancholy isolation? In this last example, a simple adjustment in blocking patterns for Jessica—is she spatially included or excluded?—could make all the difference in our response. And this is precisely my point. Shakespeare's usual technique allows a reader to contemplate a full range of possibilities. Similarly, in the rehearsal process a director and actor are relatively free to choose how they are going to enact the unfulfilled potential of textual suggestion through a specific, visual, and performable means and how they will further integrate that interpretive choice into a network of other such performance signs and response cues. A Shakespearean text, then,

is sufficiently flexible and open in its suggestiveness to stimulate a variety of theatrical renderings, all of which can play convincingly, even contradictory ones. For reader and director alike, the exact and complete character of the text will remain teasingly elusive.

There are times, however, when Shakespeare minimizes the range of interpretation and restricts substantive variations in staging. Some of his authorial interventions through stage directions, especially those that are implied and internal, seem to specify a particular stage action or gesture and, at the same time, to delimit the scope of audience response. Catesby's aside, "The King is angry, see, he gnaws his lip" (*Richard III*, IV. ii. 27), would be pointless without a corresponding gesture; it is a localized cue for the actor playing Richard. Yet the line also has implications for the remaining scenes of the play; it is a Shakespearean direction that focuses audience attention on this unprecedented inner stress in the main character and alerts us to how the dramatic conflict of the play's concluding scenes might generally proceed. In seeking to direct both an actor's playing and an audience's awareness, Shakespeare has indicated a theatrical means for evoking perceptual tension in the audience and for maintaining the particular pattern of progression and resistance that gives the closing movement of the play its unique form. At such moments, Shakespeare's internal cues become what Ann Slater has called "the oblique imperatives of the dialogue."⁴

For a more detailed examination of what I'm referring to, I would like to return to *Coriolanus*. Specifically, I would like to look at two examples of how Shakespeare intends internal performance cues to act simultaneously as response cues, directing, expanding, and intensifying an audience's awareness and feelings. The first occurs in II i where Shakespeare dramatizes Volumnia's haste to meet the triumphal procession of Coriolanus. He indicates the urgency of Volumnia's entrance (along with Virgilia and Valeria) through Menenius' greeting, "whither do you follow your eyes so fast" (II i. 98-9)? Then he insistently underscores Volumnia's impatient desire to move on: "For the love of Juno, let's go"; and some thirty lines later, "Good ladies, let's go" (II i. 101 & 133). Three times Shakespeare delays her exit and interrupts her movement toward Coriolanus by having a contrary impulse distract her. Volumnia becomes absorbed in narrating her son's past and present military exploits and proclaiming her maternal pride, as she contemplates (and enumerates) the outward and visible signs of her son's heroism, his accumulated scars. Eventually, the promised exit is denied us, since the procession enters to Volumnia.⁵ Certainly, this is a fine instance of dramatic economy. Shakespeare gives us one space instead

of two, two entrances rather than three entrances and an exit. He also manages to convey necessary background information, while sustaining dramatic tension through the antithetical pulls on Volumnia. But, equally as important, Shakespeare has used the simple technique of a delayed exit to mold our perceptions in significant ways. By having Volumnia's narration of Coriolanus momentarily take precedence over their actual meeting, Shakespeare has made us feel Volumnia's obsessive and proprietary interest in the *idea* of her warrior son, "my boy Martius" (II. i. 100), has strongly implied that Coriolanus is a creature of his mother's martial pride, and has given us a visible enactment of Volumnia's dominance by having Coriolanus and the procession come to her (rather than Volumnia to them).

My second example is a far more complex sequence of dramatic impressions leading to Coriolanus' capitulation to his mother's pleas (V. i. to V. iii.). The text gives us two failed attempts at intercession, one reported and one dramatized, before we experience directly the climactic and successful appeals of his family. Throughout this sequence there is an unusually high frequency of internal stage directions. Many of these textual cues denote acts of kneeling and other gestures of supplication, as those who were closest to Coriolanus entreat for mercy. Other cues signal resistance; they characterize Coriolanus' revocative stance through acts of turning away—Coriolanus either turns his back on supplicants or summarily dismisses them from his presence. Much of the dramatic energy of these scenes resides in and is symbolized by this juxtaposition of antithetical gestures: for each pressure on Coriolanus to acknowledge an interdependent humanity and a personal history there is a corresponding insistence on radical individualism. However, as the emotional assaults on Coriolanus' adopted solipsism accumulate and intensify, Shakespeare also directs us to sense a mounting turmoil and vulnerability within Coriolanus that is at odds with his statements and demeanor.

The beginning of this climactic sequence is a compound of negative expectations. V. i. opens with Menenius' blunt refusal to intercede, "No, I'll not go" (V. i. 1). He sees in the precedent of Cominius' rejection the hopelessness of any such attempt. Cominius' brief narrative of his failure provides a forbidding image of the new alien Coriolanus, a man who ruthlessly denies any personal and national past: "He was a kind of nothing, titleless, / Till he had forg'd himself a name a' th' fire / Of burning Rome" (V. i. 13-15). Against this nihilistic urge, Menenius' reluctant decision to test his relationship with Coriolanus seems ineffectual: it is based on the feeble rationalization that his success

depends on Coriolanus' full stomach; his exit is accompanied by Cominius' assertion of Coriolanus' inflexibility, "He'll never hear him" (V. i. 62); and his rejection is further assumed when Cominius identifies Volumnia and Virgilia as Rome's last hope. In one scene, we are informed that Cominius has failed, Menenius is about to fail, and mother and wife will probably fail. Cominius focuses these apparent certainties in the symbolic language of gesture: "I kneel'd before him; / 'Twas very faintly he said, 'Rise'; dismiss'd me / Thus, with his speechless hand" (V. i. 65-67).⁶ The physical entreaty of kneeling has been countered by a "speechless hand," the sign of an incommunicative and inaccessible Coriolanus.

The narrative expectations of failure are immediately dramatized in the next scene by the physical resistance of the Volscian watch. The dialogue implies that Menenius tries several times to advance and is each time rudely checked. Following the initial challenge of the guards, "Stand, and go back" (V. ii. 1), Menenius is rebuffed another five times with some variant of the assertion that he cannot pass and must go back, before the final warning of the First Watch with its iterated "back": "My general cares not for you. Back, I say, go; lest I let forth your half-pint of blood. Back, that's the utmost of your having, back" (V. ii. 55-57). This implied physical movement of advancement and repulsion establishes the rhythmic pattern for the scene's subsequent verbal struggles. Menenius' determined urging of his name, along with his love and past service for Coriolanus, is mocked as "the palsied intercession of such a decay'd dotant as you seem to be" (V. ii. 43-45). The entrance of Coriolanus is at best an ironic reprieve, since Menenius' long speech of gloating triumph is negated by a single word, "Away!" (V. ii. 80). Cominius' earlier report and the blocking stance of the guards are curtly and preemptorily affirmed. Having come as a father to a son, offering tears to quench Coriolanus' vengeful fire, Menenius can only react with impotent shock, "How? away?" (V. ii. 81) and then with speechless amazement as Coriolanus disclaims all personal bonds:

Wife, mother, child I know not . . .

.....

.. That we have been familiar,
 Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison rather
 Than pity note how much. Therefore be gone.

(V. ii. 82-87)

After this verbal echo of the guards' warning, Coriolanus bluntly suppresses an apparent attempt by Menenius to prolong his audience,

“Another word, Menenius, / I will not hear thee speak.” (V. ii. 91-92); then, he turns away to exit. The end of the scene recreates its beginning; but now Menenius is despondent among the mocking sentinels and, in a parody of Coriolanus facing Rome, full of the spite that humiliation breeds: “Let your general do his worst. For you, be that you are, long; and your misery increase with your age! I say to you, as I was said to, ‘Away!’” (V. ii. 105-08). Menenius not only leaves the stage quoting Coriolanus, but he repeats Coriolanus’ action of turning his back on others.

At the moment of his exile, Coriolanus had retaliated by banishing Rome: “Despising, / For you, the city, thus I turn my back; / There is a world elsewhere” (III. ii. 133-35). That “world elsewhere,” whatever its nature and dimensions, rests on the decisive act of turning away, not only from what Coriolanus despises, but also from those elements in Rome that have fashioned and nourished him. To underscore the ironies of Coriolanus’ indiscriminate revenge, Shakespeare does not allow Coriolanus the pleasure of punishing his enemies. Instead, it is his friends who must “fall down, and knee / [Their] way into his mercy” (V. i. 5-6) and who must suffer the humiliation of rejection. The turning away of and from past friends becomes Coriolanus’ self-defining action; his uncharacteristic terseness is the corresponding verbal sign of his new identity. He seems to have earned the Volscian judgment that closes Act V, scene ii: “He’s the rock, the oak not to be windshaken” (V. ii. 110-11).

The dominant thrust of these two scenes seems to accord with this public view of Coriolanus’ implacability. Shakespeare has cultivated a strong incremental effect in which staged action both visualizes and is intensified by repeated variations in the language of denial. Yet Shakespeare has also cued his audience to a more complex response through several textual hints that Coriolanus’ gestures and public declarations are self-consciously performed and something less than absolute. Each subversive pressuring of the audience’s perception stresses outward expression in a way that might imply a contrasting inner life. Shakespeare has Cominius say that Coriolanus “would not seem (stress added) to know” him (V. i. 8), raising the possibility, almost imperceptibly at first, that the new Coriolanus is an artificial or forced role. Cominius’ observation that Coriolanus’ “injury” is “the jailer to his pity” (V. i. 64-65) suggests that pity is still potential; although it is shut off, it still exists and, therefore, could be released. Pity is again mentioned in a curious and contradictory moment. When Coriolanus invalidates his former relationship with Cominius, he envisions a rivalry between “Ingrate forgetfulness” and pity in which familiarity is poisoned (V. ii. 85-87). Then, out of pity, he paradoxically renews his terms to Rome as a

token of the friendship he has sought to deny: "Yet, for I loved thee, / Take this along, I writ it for thy sake" (V. ii. 89-90). As he begins to turn from Menenius, he reverses himself once again in reasserting indifference to his Roman past: "This man, Aufidius, / Was my belov'd in Rome; yet thou behold'st!" (V. ii. 92-93). The invitation to Aufidius to serve as a confirming witness extends indirectly to us, the other audience. However, what we have observed is not controlled by Coriolanus' intentions. In spite of his attempt to abstract himself from time and heredity, there is still a recalcitrant memory, still an inner world of feeling that his defiant gestures will not acknowledge. The intimation of unresolved tensions within Coriolanus is further conveyed through another form of self-contradiction. Although his defiance of Rome argues fierce independence, he also sees himself as subject to Volscian authority, "My affairs / Are servanted to others: . . . my remission lies / In Volscian breasts" (V. ii. 82-85); and he is strangely eager for Aufidius' approval, as if his harshness to Menenius was a self-conscious attempt to vindicate his new role—an insecure role—as exile and enemy of Rome.

To prepare us for the struggle to come, Shakespeare opens V. iii. by repeating Coriolanus' need for Volscian sanction; but this time he has Coriolanus confess a strong residual affection for Menenius, an old man who loved him "above the measure of a father" (V. iii. 10). He had dismissed Menenius "with a crack'd heart," had "show'd sourly to him" even though he was renewing his "first conditions" to acknowledge Menenius' "old love." He concludes, "a very little / I have yielded to" (V. iii. 8-17). Coriolanus here articulates the affective tension that was earlier implied, an instinctive sense of filial ties and past love in conflict with a strained effort of will to deny indebtedness and create an autonomous self in the present.

These verbal signs of inner reflection, emotional strain, and outer concession lead directly into the entrance of Coriolanus' family. The stage direction for that entrance, in itself, is non-prescriptive: "Enter Virgilia, Volumnia, Valeria, young Martius, with Attendants." However, Shakespeare adds Coriolanus' more specific commentary: "My wife comes foremost; then the honor'd mould / Wherein this trunk was fram'd, and in her hand / The grandchild to her blood" (V. iii. 22-24). These lines cue both audience and actors to the symbolic importance of a particularized stage action. Although more than three characters enter, the audience's attention is directed to the trio of wife, mother, and son. Coriolanus sees only the three people to whom he is most vulnerable; and he sees them in the same order in which he has earlier claimed not to know them (V. ii. 82). Their physical order reinforces Volumnia's central

position and her directing function. She, not Virgilia, holds young Martius by the hand, visually suggesting her role in the cultivation of Coriolanus that she asserts later in this scene: "Thou art my warrior, / I [holp] to frame thee" (V. iii. 62-63). The linking of Volumnia and young Martius, physically and verbally, also represents the displacement of Virgilia in the lives of Coriolanus and his son, while the text calls attention to another trio in the bloodline of mother, son, and grandson. Before the scene is over, what Virgilia represents will have to be symbolically reintegrated, the potency of her silent and sympathetic womanhood confirmed in Coriolanus' grieving silence. Finally, the joined hands offer a glimpse forward to the bonding gesture that completes this sequence.

The climactic encounter between Coriolanus and his family is exceptional for its high concentration of specified gestures, most of them signalled by internal stage directions. Were it not for Coriolanus' voiced observations, we would not know that Virgilia curtsies, Volumnia bows, and his son has "an aspect of intercession, which / Great Nature cries, 'Deny not' " (V. iii. 32-33). By having Coriolanus verbalize the pleading actions of his family, Shakespeare underlines these gestures, but, more importantly, he shifts our focus to their impact on Coriolanus:

. . . But out, affection
 All bond and privilege of nature, break!
 Let it be virtuous to be obstinate.
 What is that curtsy worth? or those doves' eyes,
 Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not
 Of stronger earth than others. My mother bows. . . .
 (V. iii. 24-29)

The vacillations in this speech bring to the surface those earlier hints of emotional confusion. Susceptible to gestures that claim emotional linking, Coriolanus is compelled to devalue them; seeking what is unknown even to gods, an immunity to feeling, he must confess a common humanity; wilfully and stubbornly driving out compassion in order to destroy, he nonetheless melts in the physical presence of his family and risks being himself "forsworn." However, Coriolanus' comments are structured so that each welling up of instinct is counteracted by a suppressive act of will, concluding with a radical declaration of self:

. . . Let the Voisces
 Plough Rome and harrow Italy, I'll never
 Be such a gosling to obey instinct, but stand
 As if a man were author of himself.

And knew no other kin.

(V. iii. 33-37)

The perverted image of cultivation, the scornful reduction of instinct, and the negative absolutes say one thing; simultaneously, dramatic context may lead us to reflect that we have just experienced the unintended resilience of Coriolanus' instinct, while the conditional "As if a man were author of himself," implying that he is not, is a further cue to the brittle artifice of Coriolanus' solitary posture. These subversive innuendoes immediately combine in Coriolanus' words to Virgilia in which he uses the language of theatrical performance to express the failure of his assumed role under the pressure of strong emotions: "Like a dull actor now / I have forgot my part, and I am out, / Even to a full disgrace" (V. iii. 40-42).

From this point on, Shakespeare expresses through gesture an accelerating emotional rhythm of acceptance and rejection. Not only does he intensify the gestural counterpoint of the previous scenes, but he makes the actions of kneeling and turning away generate much of the scene's dramatic weight, visually expressing and reinforcing the strong verbal antithesis of the text and dramatizing the physical ritual that occurs between Coriolanus and his family.⁷ Coriolanus claims to stand alone and untouched, yet his first action is one of recognition and respect: "Sink, my knee, i' th' earth" (V. iii. 50). Volumnia's response is to give Coriolanus the Roman subjection he has demanded of others. Just as Coriolanus reluctantly witnesses the humiliation of Cominius and Menenius, he must now face the painful irony of a mother kneeling to her son:

...O, stand up blest!
 Whilst with no softer cushion than the flint
 I kneel before thee, and improperly
 Show duty as mistaken all this while
 Between the child and parent

(V. iii. 52-56)

This inverted gesture, clearly intended as a reproof ("improperly / Show duty"), seizes the initiative from Coriolanus, forcing him, as he raises his mother, into the reactive stance of a "corrected son" (V. iii. 57).

Throughout this scene, Coriolanus is on the defensive. He counters his wife's sorrow with an evasive and illogical distinction:

...Best of my flesh

Forgive my tyranny; but do not say
 For that, "Forgive our Romans." O, a kiss
 Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!

(V. iii. 42-45)

Coriolanus begs forgiveness for the violence he must still discharge and tries to deflect Virgilia's appeal with a gesture of love; but the similes he uses to describe his kiss unintentionally argue against his distinction between what is personal and what is political. He employs a similar quibble later to resist his mother:

... I beseech you peace;
 Or, if you'd ask, remember this before:
 The thing I have forsworn to grant may never
 Be held by you denials.

(V. iii. 78-81)

By abstracting his vow and by separating his family from the fate of Rome, Coriolanus strives to deny their suit without the emotional guilt of rejecting their love. Volumnia parries by dismissing further rationalization:

... O, no more, no more!
 You have said you will not grant us any thing;
 For we have nothing else to ask but that
 Which you deny already. Yet we will ask,
 That, if you fail in our request, the blame
 May hang upon your hardness, therefore hear us.

(V. iii. 86-91)

Recognizing that if they do not ask, they cannot be denied, Volumnia insists on formalizing their petition in order to thrust responsibility onto Coriolanus. Forced to enact his choice in their sight, he will be made to feel its full implications. Volumnia's actual solicitation specifically equates Rome and family. She urges Coriolanus to reflect on the pathetic distortion of family roles and to see his revenge as a violation of those closest to him:

... Think with thyself
 How more unfortunate than all living women
 Are we come hither, since that thy sight, which should
 Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
 Constrains them weep and shake with fear and sorrow,
 Making the mother, wife, and child to see
 The son, the husband, and the father tearing
 His country's bowels out . . .

(V. iii. 96-103)

Volumnia's language becomes increasingly physical as she presents to Coriolanus the impossible alternatives of entering Rome shackled in defeat and publicly humiliated or else in triumphal procession bearing "the palm for having bravely shed / Thy wife and children's blood" (V. iii. 117-18). Coriolanus is compelled to listen as Volumnia, seconded by Virgilia, personalizes and redefines the revenge of treading on a country's ruin in the grotesque physical image of treading on a "mother's womb" (V. iii. 124); and then his son's precocious defiance, "'A shall not tread on me; / I'll run away till I am bigger, but then I'll fight" (V. iii. 127-28) provides him with a refraction of his own unnatural behavior. Coriolanus' reaction is to leave, to turn away, no longer a sign of angry dismissal (if it ever fully was), but a desperate attempt to avoid their sight and escape his instincts: "Not of a woman's tenderness to be, / Requires nor child nor woman's face to see. / I have sate too long" (V. iii. 129-31). Only in their absence has Coriolanus been able to disavow his family; now he longs to escape their presence in order to avoid their love. Significantly, his one brief utterance in an eighty-nine line segment testifies to the power of what he sees, not what he hears.

Volumnia's final verbal assault on Coriolanus is punctuated by appeals against his silence: "Speak to me, son"; "Why dost not speak?" (V. iii. 148; 153) and by exhortations to Virgilia and young Martius: "Daughter, speak you"; "Speak thou, boy" (V. iii. 155-56). Volumnia's words further highlight Coriolanus' silent immobility, previously the theatrical sign of unalterable will, but now of an extreme uncertainty and desperation within. When Coriolanus, struggling to maintain his composure, finally does turn away, Volumnia speaks to his back; she forces into his imagination the image of communal kneeling that she herself stage-manages and she interprets for him the inarticulate pathos of his pleading son:

...—He turns away.
 Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
 To his surname Coriolanus 'longs' more pride
 Than pity to our prayers. Down! an end,
 This is the last. So, we will home to Rome,
 And die among our neighbors. —Nay, behold'st!
 This boy, that cannot tell what he would have,
 But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,
 Does reason our petition with more strength
 Than thou hast to deny't.

(V. iii. 168-77)⁸

Volumnia had begun her long speech by begging Coriolanus not to turn

away, "Nay, go not from us thus" (V. iii. 131). Now, having insisted on the irrevocability of natural bonds and having awakened Coriolanus to the self-defeating implications of his private war on Rome, she abruptly makes to turn away from him as he had sought to turn from others. Her threatened withdrawal has a stunning impact. It offers to counter gesture with gesture; but it also suddenly reverses the intensive and cumulative series of emotional appeals, both rhetorical and gestural, that has marked these scenes. Volumnia's strategic twist is to surrender her initiative to Coriolanus. She prods him to reenact his repudiation of Cominius and Menenius by ordering his family to go, to seal in a final gesture his banishment of Rome:

...—Come, let us go.
 This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
 His wife is in Corioles, and his child
 Like him by chance. —Yet give us our dispatch.

(V. iii. 177-80)

Before lapsing into silence for the rest of the scene, Volumnia holds out to Coriolanus the imminent reality of being cut off from his family, and then refuses to desert him. Denied any tactic of emotional retreat, Coriolanus must himself choose to have them turn away. This last ironic stimulus is the immediate cause of Coriolanus' capitulation.⁹ He performs a simple gesture that signifies more than words can bear in a moment of silence so profoundly eloquent and so complex in its intimations: "[Coriolanus] holds her by the hand, silent." An act without words is an appropriate climax to a dramatic sequence that has relied so heavily on stage gestures to externalize and define its emotional energy and rhythms.

Coriolanus' silent gesture is a singular moment in performance; but its theatrical force results from its precisely crafted context, from the cumulative interplay of gesture and word that has engaged the audience's attention and molded the general shape of their response. The text has prepared us for this moment by establishing a vital antithesis that is described verbally and expressed theatrically in a pattern of opposed stage gestures. On the one hand, characters within the play feel the inevitability of Rome's destruction and take Coriolanus' gestures of dismissal and turning away for what they seem, absolute rejections. Even after the fact, the text has Menenius remind us how improbable Coriolanus' capitulation really seems:

If it be possible for you to displace it [yong coign a' th'
 Capitol] with your little finger, there is some hope the
 ladies of Rome, especially his mother, may prevail with

him. But I say there is no hope in't; our throats are
sentenc'd, and stay upon execution.

(V. iv. 4-8)

Alternatively, the climactic structure of appeals and textual indications of Coriolanus' inner turmoil subtly redefine his gestures as defensive poses and direct an audience to expect what, within the play, is unexpected. A simple physical action, performed and held in silence, suddenly undoes and resolves a sustained dramatic counterpoint.

By reversing the gestural pattern of rejection (and Coriolanus' physical isolation for most of the play) and by fulfilling the other gestural pattern that calls for the primacy of human relationships, the text seems to narrow the scope of our perspective. Every aspect of this dramatic sequence has been pushing us to this one simplifying moment; yet, when it occurs, its significance and our response to it are anything but single and simple. No sooner does Shakespeare release the tension that has been building intensively through three scenes, than he has Coriolanus articulate another tension that has been working its way ever closer to the surface:

...O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at O my mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But, for your son, believe it—O, believe it—
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortal to him. But let it come.

(V. iii. 182-89)

This complicating perception has already taken theatrical form in a competing silence: as Coriolanus acts out what he cannot express, he is set against the hostile, but cynically approving spectator, Aufidius.

Shakespeare has created such a layering effect by giving voice to Aufidius' treacherous design immediately prior to this sequence: "When, Caius, Rome is thine, / Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine" (IV. vii. 56-57). Aufidius' statement of concealed intention sets a hazardous edge to the following scenes. It also allows Shakespeare to exploit the visual irony of Aufidius' presence during the two dramatized petitions to Coriolanus, an irony that is verbally underscored by Coriolanus' repeated appeals for Aufidius' approval: not only is Coriolanus' desire for autonomy contradicted by his need for an audience, but he seeks validation from the man who wants his failure and death.¹⁰

Thus, when Coriolanus voices his foreboding and then turns once again to Aufidius, the promised release and clarification are withheld, the line of our response disturbed:

.. Now, good Aufidius,
Were you in my stead, would you have heard
A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?

(V. iii. 191-93)

Aufidius' equivocal reply, "I was mov'd withal" (V. iii. 194), and his subsequent aside in which he falsely separates mercy and honor sound as a death knell for Coriolanus. At the same time, Coriolanus' enquiry challenges the other audience in the theater to confront the nature of their silence: would we have heard less or granted less?

The French term for playgoing, *assister à une représentation*, is particularly appropriate here: as audience, we both attend and participate in a play.¹¹ Certainly, one generally recognized trait of a Shakespearean text is its capacity to involve an audience in the complex and irreducible life of the play, freeing its necessary questions to resonate in individual imaginations. It is also something of an axiom that Shakespeare accomplishes this, most notably in his middle and late plays, by cultivating enigma, ambiguity, and multiple perspectives, and by leaving his texts suggestively open to numerous possibilities for staging. And yet, without diminishing the customary reverberations of his text, Shakespeare has chosen in *Coriolanus*, especially in the important final sequence of scenes, to be unusually precise about what he wants his actors to do.¹² To give such sustained importance and frequency to specified gestures is something rare for Shakespeare. But how rare? Are there comparable sequence in other plays? If so, why does Shakespeare become more directive in these instances, instead of leaving the specific form of the theatrical experience to his actors and audience? These are questions to be asked, but left us yet to prove.

The University of Western Ontario

Notes

¹See the interesting discussion of the Coriolanus-Volumnia relationship in Janet Adelman, " 'Anger's My Meat': Feeding, Dependency, and Aggression in *Coriolanus*," in Murray M. Schwartz and Coppelia Kahn, eds., *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 129-49.

²All references to Shakespeare's plays are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

³See the discussion of the elopement as a broken ceremony in Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp. 125-27.

⁴Ann Pasternak Slater, *Shakespeare the Director* (Sussex: Harvester, 1982), p. 1.

⁵Volumnia's delayed exit was first called to my attention by John Ripley, McGill University, in an unpublished paper on dialogic cues that he presented to a Shakespeare Association of America Seminar in 1984.

⁶The demonstrative "Thus" seems to call for an accompanying gesture of dismissal, a gesture that Coriolanus could repeat in the next scene.

⁷Although most implicit stage directions in V. iii. seem to call for a specific gesture in performance, it is far from certain that young Martius kneels when Volumnia orders him to: "Your knee, sirrah" (V. iii. 75). Coriolanus' praise, "That's my brave boy!" (V. iii. 76), could apply to his kneeling as an act of respect, or equally as well to his refusal to kneel, an image of his father's stubbornness and desired independence. Later, during Volumnia's final speech, it is most probable that Coriolanus' son is on his knees, either maintaining the position from before or assuming it. Volumnia's reference to young Martius, "This boy, that cannot tell what he would have, / But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship" (V. iii. 174-75), seems to describe a concurrent action; without corresponding gestures, her words would be senseless.

⁸Slater, p. 134, assumes that Coriolanus turns his back to Volumnia and to the audience: "Coriolanus, overwhelmed by the eloquence of his mother's pleas, turns away from her, so that neither she nor the audience can tell what effect her words are having." Without indicating what kind of stage she envisions, Slater treats her staging as an invariable fact. However, a plausible and dramatically effective alternative would involve an audience by having them view Coriolanus' face as Volumnia speaks to his back.

⁹There is a considerable variety of opinion about why Coriolanus gives in. Slater, p. 77, claims that the coordinated kneeling of Coriolanus' family causes him to buckle. David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 169, focuses on the irony of Volumnia's kneeling: "The cause of his capitulation is summed up in the paradoxical stage image of a mother kneeling to her son." Jean E. Howard, *Shakespeare's Art of Orchestration: Stage Technique and Audience Response* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p. 87, stresses the indeterminacy of the moment that stimulates imaginative completion by the audience: "For the proud, emotionally awkward Coriolanus, assenting to Volumnia's request is an act of such enormity that it begs speech. He articulates neither what he feels nor why he has decided to assent to her desires." Although there are a number of emotional pressures to which Coriolanus may react, the structure of the scene does give a climactic importance to Volumnia's threatened turning away from her son. A similar point is made by Joyce Van Dyke, "Making a Scene: Language and Gesture in *Coriolanus*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 30 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 145.

¹⁰See Michael Goldman's discussion of "the fallacy of self-authorship" and the dependence of character on an audience, in "Characterizing Coriolanus," *Shakespeare Survey*, 34 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially p. 82. Not only does Shakespeare have Coriolanus make several appeals to Aufidius in a relatively short span, but he also gives the repetitions strategic placing. Coriolanus' second address to Aufidius begins V. iii., his third, introduces Volumnia's formal petition, and his last occurs just after Coriolanus' bonding gesture, constituting an inimical frame for this climactic movement.

¹¹My thanks to Barbara Hodgdon for recalling to me the pertinence of this phrase and

for her other useful suggestions.

¹²It is no accident that Bevington owes the title of his recent book to this play. He begins his investigation of the evocative power of stage gestures by referring to Volumnia's advice to Coriolanus: "for in such business / Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the' ignorant / More learned than the ears" (III. ii. 75-77).

Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* and Catharsis by D. Douglas Waters

Aristotelian criticism has often enlightened our understanding of Shakespeare's tragedies, but has, more often than not, judged *Timon of Athens* a failure as tragedy. In this play some critics see no moral significance and hence no tragedy mainly because it lacks, in their judgment, a dignified hero and catharsis as purgation of pity and fear in the audience—limitations which usually dwell only in the minds of the critics or which, even if they exist in the play itself, are not hindrances to it as a tragedy. In this essay I shall suggest another type of catharsis, catharsis as clarification of human experience, a view first set forth in English writings by Leon Golden, O. B. Hardison, Jr., and John F. Andrews. This interpretation of Aristotle is very important for the study of *Timon of Athens* as tragedy: it stresses our intellectual understanding of the hero's plight and our emotional responses of pity and fear for him; it allows these elements to balance themselves off against our moral or ethical clarification of Timon's motivation and action without emphasizing his moral weaknesses to the exclusion of everything else; and it questions the heavyhanded stress some critics have placed on the theme of moral growth and development in the hero. This reading obviously interprets the play as a tragedy, not as a satire.¹

My view of Aristotle's catharsis as clarification is supported by Leon Golden, O.B. Hardison, Jr., and John F. Andrews, although none of them has thus far written on *Timon of Athens*. On intellectual and emotional aspects, Golden's original essay entitled "Catharsis" (1962) cogently argues that catharsis can be understood as the intellectual clarification of human experience presented in the *mythos* of the tragedy, translating the catharsis clause in the *Poetics*, Chapter VI, as "achieving, through the representation of pitiful and fearful situations, clarification of such incidents."² In this context, Golden points out that tragic mimesis or artistic imitation, according to Aristotle, is similar to other forms of artistic representation in that it pleases by involving us in a learning process. Hardison discusses non-Shakespearean plays and *Hamlet* and defines catharsis as clarification, "an object lesson in 'how these things came about,'" or "the result of learning something about the events forming the tragic plot."³

Andrews in "The Catharsis of *Romeo and Juliet*" (1974) correctly conceives of "purgation and purification as probable but not necessary by-products of the intellectual clarification a worthy tragic sequence

will induce.”⁴ In “‘The Purpose of Playing’: Catharsis in *Hamlet*” (1980) Andrews argues effectively that catharsis in a broad sense can “mean dramatic effect, the total impact a well conceived and capably performed play will have upon an alert and sensitive viewer.”⁵ He reasonably maintains therefore that catharsis refers to the intellectual, emotional, and ethical and/or spiritual effect a tragic sequence induces in a perceptive auditor.⁶

Andrews also gives proper emphasis to Aristotle’s distinction between catharsis for the audience and the tragic hero’s *anagnorisis* (discovery/recognition) or enlightenment. However, some critics, explains Andrews, contend that Aristotle was thinking primarily of *anagnorisis* when he employed the word *catharsis* and thus attempt “to locate catharsis within the protagonist rather than within the audience.” In contrast to this position, Andrews effectively distinguishes the term as follows:

It seems best...to reserve the word ‘catharsis’ for reference to the intellectual, emotional, and ethical effect a tragic sequence induces in a perceptive auditor, and to employ some other term, such as ‘anagnorisis’, for such analogous effects as may occur within the protagonist or other characters of the drama.⁷

Catharsis as our intellectual, emotional, and moral clarification in *Timon of Athens* is our painful recognition that the hero destroys himself through his “tragic flaw” of excess feelings. Timon’s flaw differs from Aristotelian *hamartia*, which recent translators and critics have interpreted not as a “flaw” but as a “mistake,” “error,” or “miscalculation.”⁸ In Shakespeare, as Matthew Black has shown in “Aristotle’s Mythos and the Tragedies of Shakespeare” (1968), the tragic flaw is very important:

This is a deep-seated weakness, moral or otherwise, which may be the cause of the mistake, or may doom the hero after a mistake arising from some lesser weakness or even from a virtue.⁹

James E. Phillips stated it effectively in *The State in Shakespeare’s Greek and Roman Plays* (1940): “The tragic flaw in Timon’s nature is the excess of feeling which renders him incapable of reasonable action.”¹⁰ It is quite true that he has many other weaknesses and that his tragic flaw is thus debatable: It has for example been interpreted as prodigality (most often), excessive goodness, folly, or moral “blind-

ness.”¹¹ But, as I see it, Timon’s excess feelings such as kindness, joy, and/or friendship really motivate, in one way or another, all these other weaknesses. Thus his excess feelings are the actual cause of Timon’s downfall. These excess feelings are evident everywhere one sees the hero in Act I; they lead, for example, to his well known prodigality. Giving feasts, entertainments, gifts, and other favors is merely a way of expressing Timon’s feelings. When he decides to free Ventidius from debtor’s prison, Timon emphasizes particularly his feeling of friendship, “I am not of that feather to shake off / My friend when he must need me” (I. i. 103-104).¹² His excess friendship here excludes caution and judgment, just as it does also when Timon responds as follows to Ventidius’ “offer” to return the five talents:

O, by no means,
Honest Ventidius; you mistake my love;
I gave it freely ever, and there’s none
Can truly say he gives, if he receives.

(I. ii. 8-11)

Again excessive feelings of friendship and joy begetting prodigality are obvious also in the following excerpt from Timon’s speech at the banquet in Act I:

We are born to do benefits; and what better or properer
can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a
precious comfort ’tis to have so many like brothers com-
manding one another’s fortunes! O joy, e’en made away ere’t
be born! Mine eyes cannot hold out water, methinks. To forget
their faults, I drink to you.

(I. ii. 101-107)

Intellectually then, we understand Timon’s motivation as primarily such excessive feelings of kindness, joy, and friendship—all of which spring from his heart and express themselves in painful action. Partially because the “friendship” of his false friends is merely a mask for their personal gain and partially because Timon’s resources are limited, we respond emotionally with pity and fear. Yet part of our catharsis is our moral response to the hero’s paradoxical nature and actions. Because of these paradoxical elements Timon does not fit Aristotle’s *spoudaios* hero, a person of “moral nobility and integrity” who does noble deeds during the course of the play.¹³ His initial nobility and goodness are mixed with his flaw of excess feelings so that his actions themselves are not really noble. These paradoxical aspects Shakespeare clarifies for us

in Flavius' following remarks:

Who would be so mocked with glory, or to live
 But in a dream of friendship,
 To have his pomp and all what state compounds
 But only painted, like his varnished friends?
 Poor honest lord, brought low by his own heart,
 Undone by goodness: strange, unusual blood,
 When man's worst sin is, he does too much good.
 Who then dares to be half so kind again?
 For bounty, that makes gods, does still mar men.

(IV. ii. 33-41)

Following his feelings rather than his head, Timon has brought himself "low by his own heart, / Undone by goodness"; paradoxically it is "goodness" misused, for his excess feelings have resulted in "good deeds evilly bestowed" (IV. iii. 463). Although we respond intellectually with understanding and emotionally with pity and fear, catharsis as our moral clarification of Timon's experiences always permits us (as here) to rise above our emotional involvement (our pity and fear for Timon) and judge him as being morally responsible ("good deeds evilly bestowed") for his own destruction through commitment to wounded feelings and agonizing passions.

Although this approach allows us to recognize moral implications in the play itself, it does not make arbitrary prescriptions about a hero's moral stature or moral values. As noted above, Timon is not Aristotle's *spoudaios* hero, a man of "moral nobility and integrity." Here we recall G. B. Harrison's view, in *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (1951), that Timon's "confused or perverted" moral values as seen in his misanthropy are indications that Shakespeare "seems not to have regarded Timon as a tragic figure."¹⁴ This same view is apparently assumed by later critics. Andor Gomme's essay "Timon of Athens" (1959), for example, argues that the "grounds for Timon's consuming passion [of hatred] simply do not exist, . . ." that Timon as a person is superficial and an intellectual and moral failure, and that the play "is certainly a failure."¹⁵ In a similar fashion R. Swigg's "Timon of Athens and the Growth of Discrimination" (1967) contends that "Timon's dispensation of his wealth a second time and with more obvious irresponsibility [in a setting independent of the Athenian commercial scene] places the guilt decisively, once and for all, upon himself."¹⁶ The objection of these critics is that the hero is illogical in generalizing on the basis of his own limited, particular experience and thus in hating all men. This objection, however, is quite beside the point of Timon's tragedy, and in no way does the implication

that the play is not a tragedy really follow. Of course, Timon's development is illogical. But so are the fourth-act obsessions of Shakespeare's tragic heroes all illogical—witness Hamlet's resolve to be bloody in his thoughts, King Lear's depression and madness, Othello's beastly jealousy, Macbeth's depressive fears and crimes, Antony's intended revenge against Cleopatra for selling him, as he thinks, to the beardless boy Caesar, and Coriolanus' proud revenge in joining his old enemy Aufidius against Rome. All these obsessions are, in a sense, parallel to Timon's submission to melancholy and misanthropy, though there are admittedly also key differences. Acting illogically and/or irrationally is the essence of tragedy in most of Shakespeare's heroes, and those very facts—that Timon gives in to his excess feelings and makes immediate use of passions (which are illogical) and that Timon is thus unable to reason and act sensibly—make him ultimately a slave to melancholy and misanthropy. Our understanding of this point is part of our intellectual and emotional clarification of Timon's experience with these passions.

We must now illustrate some of the ways Shakespeare has successfully effected our catharsis as intellectual, emotional, and moral clarification by engaging or arousing—not necessarily eliminating or cleansing—our emotions of pity and fear for Timon as the tragic hero. Perhaps the best way to illustrate the dramatist's concern for the protagonist as a tragic figure is to consider the contrast between the anger of the hero and that of his friend Alcibiades. As Peter Alexander has shown in *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1961), there is greater inwardness to Timon's anger.¹⁷ Although both men have been mistreated by the senators and although both are proud and hurt, Timon's anger is tragic because it springs from his shattered idealism while Alcibiades' anger simply vents itself in immediate preparations for war on the city of Athens. For example, Timon's increasing irony in the mock prayer (in the banquet scene of Act III) makes unmistakable his loss of illusions, and it also elicits our understanding and pity:

You great benefactors, . . . reserve still to give, lest your deities be despised. Lend to each man enough, that one need not lend to another; for, were your godheads to borrow of men, men would forsake the gods. Make the meat be beloved more than the man that gives it. Let no assembly of twenty be without a score of villains. If there sit twelve women at the table, let a dozen of them be—as they are. The rest of your fees, O gods—the senators of Athens, together with the common lag of people—what is amiss in them, you gods, make suitable for destruction. For these my present friends, as

they are to me nothing, so in nothing bless them, and to
nothing are they welcome.

(III vi. 69-83)

By contrast Alcibiades simply plans external revenge against the senators immediately:

Banishment!

It comes not ill; I hate not to be banished;
It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,
That I may strike at Athens. I'll cheer up
My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.
'Tis honour with most lands to be at odds;
Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods.

(III v. 113-19)

There is obviously nothing here which matches Timon's disillusionment; the hero's disillusionment helps us respond to Timon with greater understanding, greater pity, and greater awe; his following expression of pangs of loss is a classic example:

All's obliquy;

There's nothing level in our cursed natures
But direct villainy. Therefore be abhorred
All feasts, societies and throngs of men.
His semblable, yea, himself, Timon disdains;
Destruction fang mankind.

(IV. iii. 18-23)

Some critics of *Timon of Athens* have silently expanded Aristotle's *spoudaios* hero to mean, in a non-Aristotelian fashion of course, that the hero must undergo some kind of moral or spiritual regeneration. This requirement could have been influenced by a loose handling of *anagnorisis*, Aristotle's recognition or discovery, apparently being somehow extended to mean spiritual recognition or spiritual enlightenment. It takes no great perception to see that Timon's *anagnorisis* does not deal with a discovery or recognition of the identity of a person or persons, as in Aristotle's best type of plots. His *anagnorisis*—according to Aristotle a “change from ignorance to knowledge”—occurs when Timon first recognizes the ingratitude of the old senators and his false friends (II. ii. and III. ii.), and it is simply not a profound process of enlightenment or acquisition of self-knowledge (similar to the development of characters in *King Lear* and *Othello* for example). Some critics, however, who loosely couple these ideas—the *spoudaios*

hero, *anagnorisis*, and catharsis as purgation of pity and fear—together in their theory of tragedy, find them missing in *Timon of Athens* and, making a major issue of the fact that Timon does not acquire much knowledge or wisdom or does not undergo psychological changes in a moral way, conclude that the play is not a tragedy. The real problem with this group of critics is that the play itself does not allow for their particular type of didacticism—that a tragedy must through the moral or spiritual regeneration of the hero be uplifting and positive (their way of expanding catharsis as purgation). In response to this type of theoretical requirement, I remind the reader that neither tragedy in general nor catharsis as clarification in particular necessarily demands it; on the other hand, there are good reasons, in the plays themselves, why there is no moral or spiritual regeneration in *Timon*, *Macbeth*, *Antony*, and *Coriolanus*. These heroes are not reintegrated into their societies as are such earlier figures as *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*, though even *Antony* and *Coriolanus* change psychologically toward more positive goals than do *Timon* and *Macbeth*. Yet the nature of *Timon's* degeneration—his final submission to melancholy and misanthropy—precludes any such positive change just as *Macbeth's* choice to keep wading in blood precludes a change toward psychological and social regeneration.¹⁸

Part of catharsis as intellectual and emotional clarification of *Timon's* misanthropy is our recognizing the loss, sadness, and destructiveness in his severing all ties with all people, including people who love him: *Alcibiades* and *Flavius*. Though part of our catharsis as moral clarification permits us to judge him as being responsible for his own destruction, we at the same time, as in the careers of Shakespeare's tragic heroes generally, sympathize with *Timon*, not because of but in spite of his tragic weakness—excess feelings leading ultimately to misanthropy. Just here we must recall the objection of such critics as G. B. Harrison, Andor Gomme, and R. Swigg (mentioned above) to the effect that, in rejecting these two individuals, *Timon* in his misanthropy is being perverse. I insist, however, that *Timon* is not being merely perverse: he is being *tragically* perverse. Because of his susceptibility to feelings, *Timon* cannot use restraint and cannot guard against such great loss of important human involvements. This is the heart of his tragedy. To express therefore nothing but moral disdain for *Timon* in his misanthropy would be tantamount to such irrelevant and disdainful moral disapprovals of *Othello* as the insanely jealous husband treating his own house as a brothel and calling *Desdemona* that “whore of Venice” and of *Macbeth* as the obsessed criminal returning to the weird sisters

for “knowledge” of the future and having the innocent family of Macduff murdered.

Rejecting the critical criterion that Timon must reveal moral growth in order to qualify as a tragic hero does not mean that I am denying the complex connections between our feelings and our understanding in generating our overall catharsis, for I have been suggesting all along that our catharsis as clarification includes not only intellectual aspects but also moral and emotional responses as well. I am especially objecting to restricting our emotional responses of pity and fear to whatever moral development may come in consequence of the tragic hero’s suffering. As I see it, Timon’s intense misanthropy, which is a form of moral despair, is his suffering and as such it is a despair not really different in nature from Macbeth’s or Lear’s. I admit the truth of the following point: the fact that Lear has risen above his limitations of moral despair—has achieved some degree of understanding of himself—does make his subsequent death more painful to us than Macbeth’s or Timon’s. But classifying Timon as non-tragedy on grounds that it lacks the same kind of moral development as King Lear is an oversimplification. I contend that in spite of not undergoing moral regeneration, Timon does elicit from us other types of emotional responses of pity and fear in his tragic suffering in the last parts of the play as well as in other parts discussed above.

One such example in the last half of the play is Shakespeare’s handling of his hero’s tragic suffering in Timon’s last encounter with Apemantus; this episode effects its catharsis as our intellectual, emotional, and moral clarification by contrasting Timon’s misanthropy and Apemantus’ misanthropy, the former’s greatness and the latter’s pettiness, and Timon’s inwardness and Apemantus’ superficiality. Like Thersites, Apemantus is essentially a cynical railer but often morally correct in his gloating judgments; like some critics, Apemantus cannot really understand why Timon has been hurt so deeply. And he occasionally misjudges Timon’s situation and motivation, as for example in the following prediction:

If thou didst put this sour, cold habit on
To castigate thy pride, ’twere well; but thou
Dost it enforcedly. Thou’ldst courtier be again,
Wert thou not beggar.

(IV. iii. 240-43)

Having turned misanthrope because he has been disillusioned, Timon gives a fine expression of significant feelings and insights about himself

as contrasted with the sham and superficiality in Apemantus' misanthropy:

Thou art a slave whom Fortune's tender arm
 With favour never clasped, but bred a dog.
 Hadst thou like us from our first swath proceeded
 The sweet degrees that this brief world affords
 To such as may the passive drugs of it
 Freely command, thou wouldst have plunged thyself
 In general riot, melted down thy youth
 In different beds of lust, and never learned
 The icy precepts of respect, but followed
 Thy sug'ed game before thee. But myself,
 Who had the world as my confectionary,
 The mouths, the tongues, the eyes and hearts of men
 At duty, more than I could frame employment;
 That numberless upon me stuck, as leaves
 Do the oak, have with one winter's brush
 Fell from their boughs, and left me open, bare
 For every storm that blows—I to bear this,
 That never knew but better, is some burden.
 Thy nature did commence in sufferance, time
 Hath made thee hard in't. Why shouldst thou hate men?
 They never flattered thee. . . .
 If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
 Thou hadst been a knave and flatterer.

(IV. iii. 251-77)

True, after this dignified, sensitive attack, Timon momentarily descends from this height and gets down on Apemantus' level in an attempt to rid himself of such a churlish philosopher. Whether or not he senses the futility of explaining his ideas to such an opponent as Apemantus, Timon brutally resorts to mud slinging, insult swapping, and even stone throwing. But, as Kenneth Muir has noted in *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequences* (1972),¹⁹ Timon recovers his dignity later when he sees his own approaching death:

My long sickness
 Of health and living now begins to mend,
 And nothing brings me all things.

(V. i. 184-86)

Even though Timon at one time resorts to mere personal abuse as does Apemantus in their final meeting and debate, our understanding, pity, and awe (if not fear) lie with Timon partially because of his suffering caused by disillusionment.

Shakespeare's concern for Timon as a tragic figure may also be seen in his treatment of the protagonist's off-stage death. In the light of Shakespeare's general practice of presenting death on stage, Timon's off-stage death contains more ambiguity than some critics admit. It is not definitely a suicide as many have assumed. Muriel C. Bradbrook in the *Tragic Pageant of "Timon of Athens"* (1966) may be correct in her following explanation: "His death was. . .natural and not a suicide; in plague time [in Shakespeare's time and before] a man was indeed known to dig his own grave and lie down in it to die."²⁰ It is obviously ambiguous because we cannot be sure he committed suicide; if it were definitely suicide, then it could consistently symbolize Timon's cosmic rejection, just as his misanthropy symbolizes social, moral, and political rejection. But, in any event, Shakespeare handles the ambiguity effectively through use of the epitaphs. He increases, for example, our sympathy for Timon by having Alcibiades read one of them as follows:

Here lies a wretched corse, of wretched soul bereft;
 Seek not my name: a plague consume you wicked caitiffs left!
 Here lie I, Timon, who alive all living men did hate;
 Pass by and curse thy fill, but pass, and stay not here thy gait.'
(V. iv. 70-73)

The young friend's following comments direct our understanding of, and sympathy for, Timon by permitting us to participate vicariously in Alcibiades' memory of his friend:

These [misanthropic sentiments] well express in thee thy
 latter spirits.
 Though thou abhorredst in us our human griefs,
 Scornedst our brain's flow, and those our droplets which
 From niggard nature fall, yet rich conceit
 Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
 On thy low grave, on faults forgiven.
(V. iv. 74-79)

His promise of punishment only for "Those enemies of Timon's, and mine own" (V. iv. 56) sounds a note of order and justice. Alcibiades also helps us feel tragic loss at his friend's death when he adds: "Dead / Is noble Timon, of whose memory / Hereafter more" (V. iv. 79-81).

Yet another way to see Shakespeare's concern for the hero as a tragic figure is to consider the dramatist's contrast between Timon's final rejection of the senators and Alcibiades' acceptance of them; this contrast effectively produces its catharsis as intellectual, emotional, and moral clarification by pointing up Timon's negation of life and

hence unwillingness to compromise in contrast to Alcibiades' commitment to life and thus willingness to compromise. This contrast between the two choices emphasizes, in the dramatic structure of the play, intellectual and emotional clarification of the greatness and significance of what Timon has lost in his all-out rejection. We understand for example and feel pity for his terrible disregard for life, a disregard conveyed by him to the senators as follows:

Come not to me again, but say to Athens,
 Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
 Upon the beached verge of the salt flood,
 Who once a day with his embossed froth
 The turbulent surge shall cover; thither come,
 And let my grave-stone be your oracle.
 Lips, let four words go by and language end:
 What is amiss, plague and infection mend!
 Graves only be men's works, and death their gain!
 Sun, hide thy beams; Timon hath done his reign.

(V. i. 214-23)

Alcibiades, on the other hand, shows political realism and commitment to life in his willingness to compromise by laying down his sword and entering the city of Athens in triumph. Of course, since most readers or auditors would make Alcibiades' choice rather than Timon's, our moral clarification is obvious enough but is only part of our catharsis.

Unless we take moral clarification as our complete response—as some critics do—there is no reason to stress moral disdain for Timon's misanthropy. Unless we expect tragedy to present a hero whose moral values and choices at the end of the play we can accept as our own—again as some critics seem to desire—there is no reason to deny Timon the status of a tragic figure. And unless we expect catharsis to be a process by which we are taught what to pity and fear and by which we are cleansed of these emotions (especially in those situations in which we ought not to give in to them)—once more as some critics appear to do—there is no reason to say that the play is not a tragedy. *Timon of Athens* is a tragedy where the hero's excessive feelings destroy him by begetting prodigality, revenge, and ultimately misanthropy. We experience the intellectual, emotional, and moral clarification of Timon's tragic failures as our catharsis.

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Notes

¹O.J. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Satire* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon books, 1963, 1st prtd. 1943) asserted Timon is "tragical satire" in the tradition of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* and *Volpone*, assumed the necessity of catharsis as purgation and of the hero's moral dignity and development before this type of catharsis can be experienced, and concluded that the play is not a tragedy for the following reason: "His [Timon's] catastrophe neither reconciles the destructive forces in his nature nor brings any catharsis to the spectators" (p. 192). In this context Alice L. Birney in *Satiric Catharsis in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) argues that Timon of Athens "more strikingly provides a satiric catharsis" than "tragic catharsis" (purgation of pity and fear in the audience); she defines three types of "satiric catharsis" as follows: 1) Timon's "satirist's purgation" as his personal, inner release of hatred and contempt; 2) the audience's "satiric catharsis" as its "purifying" psychic release" from "hatred and censure of man in society"; and 3) the author's "satiric catharsis" as his purgation or cleansing of "his own misanthropic emotions" of hatred and contempt (pp. 2-3, 6, and 136-37). As my argument indicates at length, Shakespeare and the audience understand Timon, sympathize with him in his suffering under the throes of misanthropy, and often feel pity and fear for him, and, though Timon himself is a satirist of sorts, the artist and we as audience neither ridicule him nor scorn him as misanthrope. The best answer to this tradition of alleged satire is by Rolf Soellner, "Timon of Athens": *Shakespeare's Pessimistic Tragedy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

²*Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 93 (1962), 51-60, esp. 58.

³"Three Types of Renaissance Catharsis," *Renaissance Drama*, 2, N.S. (1969), 3-22, esp. 21 and 15.

⁴*Contributi dell' Istituto di Filologia Moderna, Serie inglese, I*, ed. Sergio Rossi (Milan: Catholic Univ., 1974), 142-75, esp. 143.

⁵*Poetry and Drama in the English Renaissance: In Honour of Professor Jino Ozu* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya, 1980), pp. 1-19, esp. 14, n5.

⁶"The Purpose of Playing: Catharsis in *Hamlet*," p. 5 and 6.

⁷"The Catharsis of *Romeo and Juliet*," 143, 144.

⁸See Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 423-4; Isabel Hyde, "The Tragic Flaw: Is it a Tragic Error?" *Modern Language Review*, 58 (1963), 321-5, esp. 325; and Aristotle's "Poetics": *A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature*, trans. Leon Golden and comm. O.B. Hardison, Jr. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), pp. 22, 172, 177, and 184-85; hereafter cited as "Poetics."

⁹See *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (Heidelberg, 1868), 43-55, esp. 51-2; and "Hamartia in Shakespeare," *Library Chronicle*, 30 (Philadelphia, 1964), 100-16.

¹⁰(New York: Octagon Books, 1972; 1st prtd. 1940), p. 144.

¹¹See Ruth L. Anderson, "Excessive Goodness as a Tragic Fault," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 19 (1944), 85-95, esp. 95, on excessive goodness; Black, "Aristotle's Mythos and the Tragedies of Shakespeare," p. 52, on folly; and Robert S. Miola, "Timon in Shakespeare's Athens," *SQ*, 31 (1980), 21-30, esp. 28, on blindness to the necessity of choosing between virtue and vice.

¹²*The Life of Timon of Athens*, ed. J.C. Maxwell (Cambridge: At the Univ. Press, 1968; 1st prtd. 1957); all other quotations from the play are to this edition.

¹³"Poetics," pp. 4-5; see also Leon Golden, "Aristotle, Frye, and the Theory of Tragedy," *Comparative Literature*, 27 (1975), 47-58, esp. 50.

¹⁴See (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966; 1st prtd. 1951), p. 267.

¹⁵*Essays in Criticism*, 9 (1959), 107-25, esp. 115, 118, 123, and 125.

¹⁶*Modern Language Review*, 62 (1967), 387-94, esp. 390.

¹⁷(New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 183-84.

¹⁸Soellner, Chapter Five: "Timon the Misanthrope," pp. 64-82, has the best treatment of this subject which I have seen.

¹⁹(London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1972), p. 195.

²⁰See *An Inaugural Lecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 1-38, esp. 25.

A Wife Lost and/or Found by Joyce Wexler

Chaucer's *Wife of Bath* is not alone in her view of marriage as a battle for sovereignty. Whether male dominates female or female dominates male, marriage plots usually portray a struggle for power ending with husband or wife in control. Although deconstruction has been blamed for sabotaging all political uses of language in its critique of determinate meaning, Derrida's attempt to undo the binary oppositions of discourse suggests a way to envision relationships between men and women without hierarchy.¹ Derrida interferes with polarization by reversing the usual value assigned to each term—inside/outside, love/hate, male/female—and then displacing the couple.² Since this strategy can produce interpretations completely incompatible with traditional ones—another result of deconstruction—it is necessary to accept the principle of the undecidability of texts to account for the capacity of a single text to generate diverse readings.

The crucial binary pair for feminist literary theory is male/female. Using Derrida's strategy of reversing and displacing polarities and his description of undecidability, feminist criticism can offer revisionary readings of classic texts. To illustrate the benefits of these approaches, my reading of *The Winter's Tale* introduces feminist contexts to shift the emphasis from the hero's strength to his wife's.³ The play raises basic issues concerning sovereignty in marriage, but traditional interpretations focus on the tragic fall of the hero. His wife is treated as a Shakespearean version of patient Griselda, the necessary victim to assure her husband's redemption. But by expanding the context of the play to include psychoanalytic insights into unconscious motivation and giving equal attention to the female characters, other readings can emerge.

Before reversing the emphasis from Leontes' strength to Hermione's, we need to differentiate between indeterminacy in general and undecidability in literature. The difference can be illustrated by the pun, a form used by both Derrida and Freud to unlock hidden meanings. The humor of a pun depends on its ability to project at least two contexts in which it has distinct yet incompatible meanings. If the set of referents within each context is indeterminate, no incompatibility is discernible, and the joke is lost. In Shakespeare's puns, often one context is moral, another sexual. In Freud's the patient expresses the conscious context but represses the unconscious one. Although Derrida claims that any fragment of writing

can be interpreted in an unlimited number of contexts, his own puns are also undecidable rather than indeterminate because they project a limited number of distinct yet incompatible contexts. Like puns, literary form provides coherent patterns that impose limits on the multiple meanings a text can generate.

Derrida emphasizes the points in a text where formal patterns break down. He uses the skeptical analysis of deconstruction as a strategy to besiege the imaginative synthesis of Romanticism. Undecidability subverts the hegemony organic metaphors of art have enjoyed since the Romantic period. In contrast to the Romantic principle that rhythmic harmony naturally accompanies the discovery of order, Derrida's tenet is that discontinuities in the text indicate the impossibility of order. Whereas Coleridge praises the creative union of sameness and difference in poetic imitation, Derrida objectifies the relationship as a "folding-together of an identity and a difference," a "play of luck with necessity, of contingency with law. A hymen between chance and rule."⁴ Derrida's mechanistic use of sexual metaphors substitutes a genital materialism for the sexual idealism of the Romantics. The hymen "stands between the inside and the outside of a woman, and consequently between desire and fulfillment"; thus with "all the undecidability of its meaning, the hymen takes place only when it doesn't take place, when nothing really happens."⁵ The hymen is a gap in syntax. It is voiceless, female, and repressed in "phallogocentric" western metaphysics, which seeks meaning in presence rather than absence.

The conditions Derrida cites as essentials for undecidability—"the formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes it [the word]"⁶—are the same ones required for the pun or literary form in general. A word with several lexical meanings does not become a pun until it functions as the multivalent element in a syntactic unit. Instead of examining the semantic connections between words to construe the meaning of a sentence in its immediate context, Derrida points out the gaps between them. For him a sentence is like a chain. Rather than use it to pull something like a meaning behind it, he jiggles it to make us hear the rattle of the "play" between the links. Derrida's persistent word play is his way of demonstrating that "no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation."⁷ If words have varying meanings in varying contexts, the meaning of any fragment of writing is indeterminate, but I would argue that formal patterns keep the meaning of any literary text, like a pun, undecidable.

The final tableau of *The Winter's Tale* is an example of the aesthetic value of undecidability. Like a pun, the scene juxtaposes distinct yet

incompatible meanings. Hermione cannot miraculously return from death and surreptitiously come out of hiding, yet the scene achieves its dramatic effect by keeping both possibilities open. Derrida's description of undecidability is needed to preserve the full aesthetic response the play evokes and to stifle the nagging voice of reason which demands a choice between contraries. The magic of the scene is diminished if we explain away the mystery as a deception of the king practiced by Paulina and Hermione.

Most interpretations of the play focus on the theme of regeneration, whether filtered through pagan pastoral or Christian allegory. Hermione is usually portrayed as a saintly woman of exemplary patience, and Leontes is cast as the tragic hero who errs, repents, and receives forgiveness. He is a fortunate man who loses faith in his ability to sustain his blessings. He has the best of wives and the best of friends. His son is spoiled, a bit of a mama's boy, but he is beginning to rebel against the authority of his mother and her ladies—he tells her a winter's tale. Leontes' kingdom is peaceful, his ministers are loyal, and his wife is pregnant.

Suddenly he doubts the reality of his good fortune. He associates faith with innocence and immaturity; to be a man he must be cynical. He would rather be a jaded cuckold than a deceived husband. Falling into a jealous rage, he destroys his family. When he finally sees the results of his suspicion, he learns that loss of faith is a sin. Hermione's return rewards him for acknowledging his error and restores his belief. The fairy tale ending occurs here, but the play continues. The final moments can be staged to reverse the affirmation it invites and to account for missing pieces of motivation.

The plot's emphatic denial of rational grounds for Leontes' suspicion leads to a search for the sources of his behavior in his unconscious. Even before conceiving the fantasy that Hermione has committed adultery with his best friend, Leontes doubts his paternity. He first becomes enraged seeing her succeed where he failed. Polixenes refuses Leontes' invitation to postpone his departure but accepts when Hermione persuades him to stay. Leontes cries, "Too hot, too hot!" (I. ii. 108). His next thought is that Mamillius is not his son. In one swift step he moves from disgust at his wife's allure to charges that his son is illegitimate. His suspicion betrays his obsession with at least one of the two questions Freud considered unanswerable: "Is there a God?" and "Who is the father?" For Derrida these issues are conflated in his term "phallogocentrism," which expresses men's drive to discover transcendent meaning through language. Leontes also relies on words to believe

in his fatherhood; false words produce false heirs.

Unable to confront his fears of inadequacy as a husband and father, Leontes projects his insecurity onto all men and unleashes his anger at all women:

And many a man there is, even at this present,
Now while I speak this, holds his wife by th' arm,
That little thinks she has been sluic'd in 's absence
And his pond fish'd by his next neighbour, by
Sir Smile, his neighbor. . . .

(I. ii. 192-196)

As he fulminates with unjust accusations linking sexual and proprietary aspects of patriarchy, Leontes' repressed fears propel him on a course that destroys those he loves and his own happiness.

To avoid facing his loss of confidence in himself, Leontes fabricates evidence of Hermione's guilt to sustain his suspicion. When Camillo tries to reason with him, Leontes equates his fantasies with reality:

Is whispering nothing?
Is leaning cheek to cheek? is meeting noses?
Kissing with inside lip? . . .
. . . is this nothing?
Why, then the world and all that's in 't is nothing. . . .

(I. ii. 284-288)

As desperate as Lear on the heath, Leontes asserts what he has not seen. As dependent as Othello on his idealized image of his wife to validate his life, Leontes dreads being deceived. Producing the facts he needs to justify his feelings, he lets his fears rather than his senses control his idea of reality. The more firmly he insists he is right, the more clearly the audience knows he is wrong. The intense dramatic irony here portrays our dependence on sensory evidence at the same time it challenges the reliability of so-called objective perception. Representing both a fictitious reality and a fictitious character's capacity to distort it, the scene conveys the play's epistemology through its formal coherence.

Leontes' accusations require no corroboration because he has the power of assertion. Language supplies all the proof he needs. His speeches illustrate phallogocentrism in practice:

. . . O thou thing!
Which I'll not call a creature of thy place,
Lest barbarism, making me the precedent,
Should a like language use to all degrees

And mannerly distinguishment leave out
 Betwixt the prince and beggar: I have said
 She's an adulteress; I have said with whom. . . .

(II i. 82-88)

Leontes adds a political dimension to his belief that meaning is self-present in words, that his statements correspond to external reality. He argues that unless language is determinate, political hierarchy will collapse at the feet of linguistic anarchy. Language not only must be fixed, but it must be fixed by him. A child's fantasies of omnipotence are checked by his dependence on others, but as king, Leontes has the power to command obedience. The ensuing catastrophes enact the dangers of unbridled infantile egotism.

Throughout the play the rhetoric that enhances the egos of Leontes, Polixenes, and Florizel is punctured by the truths of Hermione, Paulina, and Perdita. The pattern of truthful women and deceptive men is another formal element that sustains the intentionality of the work. Women's truth is not affirmed by words but represented by silence. If the male characters are deceived about the power of their words, the females are not. Paulina, hoping the sight of his daughter will move Leontes to mercy, pays tribute to the eloquence of silence:

The silence often of pure innocence
 Persuades when speaking fails.

(II iii. 41-42)

Hermione also relies on silent actions to establish her innocence. She knows her denials of adultery will be dismissed because her husband already judges her guilty and therefore likely to lie. She trusts only heaven to judge not her words but her actions (III ii. 26-33). The silence of female characters "decomposes," in Derrida's term, the male aspiration to represent reality in language.

Hermione leads the attack on the pretentious rhetoric of men. Although usually portrayed with the endurance of Irene Pappas, Hermione could also be interpreted as a woman with the cunning and insight of Katherine Hepburn: feisty, unconventional, and incapable of lying to herself or her husband. Detecting condescension beneath Leontes' fulsome praise, Hermione launches an ironic sally on behalf of wives:

What! have I twice said well? when was't before?
 I prithee tell me; cram 's with praise, and make 's
 As fat as tame things. . . .

(I ii. 90-92)

Restive because “praises are our wages,” she satirizes the dependence of wives on their husbands. Nevertheless, she fails to make her husband see her as she is rather than as a goddess or an adulteress.

Perdita has a comparable difficulty with Florizel. When he dubs her “no shepherdess, but Flora” (IV. iv. 2), Perdita, younger and humbler in station than her mother, rebukes him respectfully but firmly:

To chide at your extremes it not becomes me:
O, pardon, that I name them!

(IV. iv. 5-6)

Both as wives and ingenues, the women in the play resist being idealized. Having seen abundant evidence of men’s duplicity, they regard hyperbole as falsehood. The verbal flourishes between Camillo and Archidamus in the first scene, Polixenes’ insincere estimate of cross-breeding, and Autolycus’ tales all elaborate the design of the play. The motif of lying links plot and characterization: who lies to whom is related to who lies with whom.

If paternity is always in question for a man, he must trust his wife to believe in his fatherhood, his responsibility for and to the child. Derrida relates the desire to establish a legitimate line to the phallogocentric quest for meaning. His use of the term “dissemination” implies such a search is futile and instead suggests the illegitimacy, proliferation, and rootlessness of meaning. When Leontes’ phallogocentric quest is frustrated, he refuses responsibility. Hearing that his son is dead and his wife has fainted, he experiences a traumatic recovery. Losing his doubts as suddenly as he acquired them, he repents and resolves to undo the harm he has done:

I’ll reconcile me to Polixenes,
New woo my queen, recall the good Camillo. . . .

(III. ii. 156-157)

His son is dead, his daughter abandoned, his wife distraught, yet Leontes thinks he can reverse the past. His doubts of paternity partly explain his failure to understand that the results of his actions cannot be erased. Because he lacks an elementary belief in the consequences of insemination, his words and deeds disseminate without significant issue.

In the sixteen-year hiatus between Hermione’s disappearance and return, Leontes repents, but he never learns that mature penance requires accepting responsibility for his sins. Eager to forget his offenses, Leontes is disposed to follow his ministers’ advice and remarry. Like a scourge, Paulina must remind him that he will never be able to replace what he

has lost. He no sooner promises Paulina never to remarry without her consent than he yearns to marry Perdita, his own daughter. Paulina chastises his inconstancy:

Your eye hath too much youth in't not a month
Fore your queen died, she was more worth such gazes
Than what you look on now.

(V. i. 25-27)

Not only is Leontes' desire for Perdita a wish to return to youth, but the plot device of concealed identities permits the incestuous aspect of this wish to be expressed as well.

Polixenes also desires Perdita. Disguised as a shepherd, he banters with her about the roles of nature and art in horticulture, but his mood darkens when he hears his son promise her riches, "one being dead" (IV. iv. 397). Hearing these words, Polixenes becomes as furious as Leontes. Florizel's eagerness to inherit reminds Polixenes that his son will replace him. From indulgent reminiscence about his own youth, Polixenes leaps to indignation at his son's lack of filial respect. When Florizel refuses to agree that he should consult his father before marrying, Polixenes tears off the disguise and disowns his son: "Mark your divorce, young sir..." (IV. iv. 427). Although he uses the word to denote the rupture between father and son, the more usual use of the term to separate husband from wife draws a parallel between Leontes and Polixenes through a pun. In middle age both men become enraged at signs their power is waning. Finding their authority limited, they abuse their positions. Leontes destroys his family, and Polixenes brutally curses both his son and Perdita. At a conscious level fathers desire heirs, but they also dread abdicating in favor of their sons. The repressed wish to live forever by banishing one's children, the initiating incident of the Oedipus myth, is another unconscious motive in the plot.

Freud's theory of creativity and the unconscious values act as a way of addressing taboo yearnings like those in *The Winter's Tale*. In the sense that a work can project a consciously apprehended context and call forth an unconscious context as well, it shares the structure of a pun. To produce its effect, the work must make both conscious and unconscious contexts specific. Words must be determinate within each context, or the efficacy of imagined worlds dissipates in vague possibilities. Multiple contexts produce literary undecidability rather than linguistic indeterminacy.

In addition to speaking with double meanings, several characters play double roles. Less tolerant than Hamlet, who accepts the world as a

stage on which we all take many parts, Leontes equates this kind of flexibility with duplicity. He denounces Hermione because he believes she is playing a false part:

Go, play, boy, play: thy mother plays, and I
 Play too, but so disgrace'd a part, whose issue
 Will hiss me to my grave. . . .

(I. ii. 187-189)

The pun that connects a child's diversion to a wife's deception and a husband's shame suggests that every act is false. In Leontes' ideal, phallogocentric world, everyone would be constant, but he sees life requires everyone to take several parts. Unable to regard multiple roles as normal and inevitable, he condemns himself, his wife, and his son for all the parts they play.

In contrast, Perdita accepts the need to assume different roles, some of which are clearly false. She forces herself to be as genial a hostess as the Shepherd's wife, though she must change her disposition to suit the "robe" she wears for the occasion. Again in disguise when fleeing Bohemia, she says: "I see the play so lies that I must bear a part" (IV. iv. 668-669). This pun also yokes the necessity of acting to the certainty of lying. Every act, whether inside or outside the play, has at least a double meaning. As Perdita rapidly acquires experience, she finds that adulthood requires a repertoire of roles.

Autolycus provides a comic parallel to Perdita's willingness to play a false part when necessary. A professional liar, he deliberately disguises himself to trick strangers. Selling tales to Mopsa, Dorcas, and the Shepherd's son, the con man is not unlike a playwright. He persuades his audience to believe him while he achieves his own purposes. Although Mopsa demands realism, "I love a ballad in print o' life, for then we are sure they are true" (IV. iv. 263-264), Autolycus offers her a choice of tales more and more outrageous yet sworn to by "Mistress Tale-porter." Mopsa is fooled and delighted. A serious echo of this scene occurs when Leontes compliments Florizel's mother: "For she did print your royal father off" (V. i. 125). Just as Mopsa wants art to copy life, Leontes and Polixenes want their sons to be prints of themselves. Autolycus satirizes the possibility and value of both kinds of fidelity.

The culminating scene for all these interpretive contexts, whether moral, psychological or aesthetic, is Hermione's reappearance. The final tableau is meticulously constructed so that it can be read both as a ruse and a resurrection. While the oracle is fulfilled—the lost child is found and reunited with her mother—the means of accomplishing this feat are

kept undecidable. To prepare the audience and appease its disbelief, several minor characters express their incredulity in terms which recall issues raised earlier. One says that “this news which is called true is so like an old tale, that the verity of it is in strong suspicion” (V. ii. 30-32). This observation is not isolated. It is part of a pattern that includes Leontes’ discredited suspicion as well as Autolycus’ mockery of realism. The opposition between life and art is blurred further by the report that “who was most marble there changed colour” (V. ii. 98). Another bystander reverses the metaphor to praise the sculptor: “he so near and stand in hope of answer” (V. ii. 105-110). Before unveiling Hermione, Paulina renders the opposing categories of life and art still less distinct: “see the life as lively mock’d as ever / Still sleep mock’d death. . . .” (V. iii. 19-20). Her image “decomposes” the tendency to polarize life and death, reality and art.

When Paulina reveals Hermione, the viewers on stage are struck dumb. She accepts their silence as a tribute to her skill:

I like your silence, it the more shows off
Your wonder: but speak; first you, my liege.
Comes it not something near?

(V. iii. 21-23)

The scene does not resolve the oppositions represented in the play but keeps them in suspension. Hermione on her pedestal is statue and woman, art and nature, trick and miracle, aged and resurrected. Embodying logical contraries, she stuns the others into the silence of undecidability. For the audience too, the tableau elicits superior knowledge of Paulina’s role in perpetrating the ruse as well as wonder shared with the characters who believe they are witnessing a miracle.

Does the undecidability of this visual pun represent a romantic synthesis of contraries or a deconstructive dissemination of meanings? Although the harmony of the parts of the play urges the first alternative, the scene also fits Derrida’s description of the hymen: “the hymen is the structure of *and/or*, between *and* and *or*. . . .”⁸ As a pun, the tableau projects two distinct contexts that are mutually exclusive yet simultaneously present. To delay the audience’s impulse to choose one or the other, the play makes both alternatives plausible and distinct: they are not indeterminate.

Since most readings dwell on the affirmative implications of this scene, an alternative interpretation must attempt to detect the hidden traces the text leaves to preserve its undecidability. The restoration of

Hermione must be miracle “and/or” trick. The latter possibility depends on Paulina’s skills as a magician. She orchestrates the transformation of the statue in several stages. First, she borrows a fairy tale formula of repetition to ease Leontes into accepting the figure as Hermione: he will “think anon it moves” and “think anon it lives.” Before permitting the “statue” to move, Paulina requires all to affirm their faith lest she be thought a witch practicing black magic. While her call for faith certainly evokes religious contexts, it also evokes other kinds of belief.

Like a magician, Paulina uses the power of suggestion to convince her audience to believe what it sees. She knows that though the sense of sight is the most gullible, it is also the most readily believed:

That she is living,
 Were it but told you, should be hooted at
 Like an old tale: but it appears she lives
 Though she speak not.

(V. iii. 116-119)

In view of Leontes’ previous reliance on distorted sensory evidence to condemn Hermione, this appeal to his vision is ironic. Empiricism may be persuasive because it appeals to our desire for certainty, but it is no more reliable than sleight of hand. At the same time, the “old tales” mentioned in the play acquire credibility. Recognizing the force of the adage that seeing is believing, Paulina also alludes to the value of the unseen realities tales convey.

When Hermione steps off the pedestal, Leontes is still full of doubt. Paulina warns him not to turn away:

...do not shun her
 Until you see her die again; for then
 You kill her double. Nay, present your hand;
 When she was young you woo’d her, now in age
 Is she become the suitor?

(V. iii. 105-109)

Describing Leontes’ reluctance to approach the “statue,” Paulina implies that his wife moves toward him. Perhaps Leontes holds back in awe and fear, but after his fresh interest in Perdita and his dismay at the signs of age Hermione shows, he seems to want more than to undo the evil of his sin. He wants time to be turned back; he wants to be young again. Paulina presents the “statue” as Hermione’s double, a look alike who can be killed as the first Hermione was destroyed if Leontes shuns her too. The pun also suggests the same woman can be killed twice if Leontes once

again rejects her. The passage from life to death or from love to disgust is not a single crossing. Death, presumably the most absolute of borders, is no more final for Shakespeare than for Derrida.

The reunion of Hermione and Leontes need not be staged as a reconciliation. Polixenes reports that Hermione embraces her husband, and Camillo adds that she “hangs about his neck.” Since these two observations are the only textual evidence that Hermione forgives Leontes, the scene could also be performed to keep forgiveness in question. The embrace which two of the king’s friends consider warm could be limited to a perfunctory, wifely response to Leontes’ tardy and reluctant kiss. Then she would turn from him to her daughter. Love for Perdita, not Leontes, has sustained Hermione all these years.

To move Hermione to speech, Paulina asks Perdita to “interpose” and ask her mother’s blessing. Hermione speaks only to her daughter, telling her that she has kept herself alive through her faith that the oracle would be fulfilled. She says nothing else. Paulina withdraws to mourn her husband, another casualty of Leontes’ rage. Nevertheless, Leontes behaves as if the past is forgiven and forgotten. Bustling with officious enthusiasm, he plans to marry Paulina to Camillo, beg the pardons of Hermione and Polixenes, and join their kingdoms through the marriage of Florizel and Perdita.

Although readers eagerly accept his happily-ever-after conclusion, there is no sanction for it in the other characters’ speeches. While Shakespeare habitually ends plays quickly, in this case the silence of the others can be portrayed as a judgment on Leontes’ foolishness. How can one mate be replaced by another? How can a woman forgive her husband for causing the death of their son and ordering the murder of their daughter? The play expresses both the wish for forgiveness and the impossibility of receiving it. Leontes repents his errors, but he never recognizes they have permanent consequences. He never learns that what is done cannot be undone. Only according to the Christian doctrine of forgiveness could Hermione be seen as an agent of divine grace capable of accepting imperfect penance. Indeed, only God could forgive Leontes—no wife could.

The final arrangement of characters on stage can support either a religious affirmation or a psychological portrait of Leontes. The text makes both these alternatives, as well as many others, available to readers, but a performance can impose the director’s interpretation. Because it recreates the circumstances of speech, drama offers a more fully defined context than the written text. If Hermione and Leontes continue to embrace each other, forgiveness is made certain for the

audience. But the bond between mother and daughter, Demeter and Persephone, can be stressed by letting the play end with Hermione and Perdita holding each other and ignoring Leontes as he rambles on about the future.

Probing the silences in a text, associating silence with women, and questioning traditional polarities, Derrida can generate new readings of Shakespeare and other classics. His strategies are useful for multiplying possible contexts to the point where feminist issues emerge. Derrida's reversal of polarities can be a first step to displacing the reductive oppositions of the marriage theme as a battle for sovereignty. Used this way, the reversal of traditional interpretations of hero-dominated texts can yield other knowledge besides who is on top.

Loyola University of Chicago

Notes

¹Especially Gerald Graff, *Literature Against Itself* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

²His method, as he says to Jean-Louis Houdebine, perhaps a little too formulaically, is reversal and displacement. It is not enough 'simply to neutralize the binary oppositions of metaphysics,' writes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Preface," to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. lxxvi.

³Other coherent yet distinct interpretations emerge from the examination of issues raised by "sexual politics" in Peter B. Erickson, "Patriarchal Structures in *The Winter's Tale*," *PMLA*, 97 (1982), 819-829, and others. Derrida's work makes the multiplicity of interpretations a contest for interest rather than correctness.

⁴Jacques Derrida, "The Double Session," *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 277.

⁵"The Double Session," p. 213.

⁶"The Double Session," p. 220. It appears in this context: "What counts here is not the lexical richness, the semantic infiniteness of a word or concept, its depth or breadth, the sedimentation that has produced inside it two contradictory layers of signification (continuity and discontinuity, inside and outside, identity and difference, etc.). What counts here is the formal or syntactical praxis that composes and decomposes it."

⁷Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979), p. 81. Derrida's effort in this piece to blur boundaries, especially between life and death, suggested the use of *The Winter's Tale* to illustrate his points.

⁸"The Double Session," p. 261.

The 1987 Alabama Shakespeare Festival by Craig Barrow

Three of the eight repertory productions of the 1987 Alabama Shakespeare Festival are by Shakespeare, *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Tempest*, but of these only *The Tempest* is worth serious consideration. Quality is not the reason for overlooking the production of Martin Platt's *The Taming of the Shrew*. It is an interesting adaptation with additional scenes and dialogue from *The Taming of the Shrew* (one of Shakespeare's sources), Sheridan's *The Critic*, Villiers's *The Rehearsal*, and Garrick's *Catherine and Petruchio* and *King Lear*. The additions to Shakespeare's play maximize the play within a play already present, while they minimize Petruchio's bullying of Katherina by emphasizing the relation of illusion and sanity in the play and its multiple frames. Because of the interest in framing in this eighteenth century production, the role of Christopher Sly, ably performed by Tad Ingram, is underscored, serving as a parallel to the "education" of Katherina by Petruchio. Greta Lambert as Katherina, aggressively perverse yet sexy, was marvelous, as was Dan Kern as Petruchio.

Edward Stern's *Othello*, set in the early nineteenth century, was flawed. In part this was due to a weak Othello—David Toney's experience as Vic Slade in *All My Children* was not sufficient preparation for such a demanding role. Toney lost valuable opportunities to exhibit Othello's strength early in the play and was inconsistent in the demanding scenes from III. iii. to the play's conclusion. Furthermore, Stern's notion as director of the play's action "constantly spiraling inwards" reduces the values of Othello and the motives of Iago to domestic melodrama. In the absence of a strong Othello, the play becomes Iago's, especially since Phillip Pleasants is the strongest actor in the company.

When one moves from the large Festival Stage and first sits down in the 225-seat Octagon, the space does not seem large enough for *The Tempest* with its storm, masque, and large cast. Martin Platt, however, has designed a production that appeals to the audience by evoking the magic of the Oriental theatrical tradition, particularly the Noh Theater. The small stage, tilted forward, is covered by sand in the front and in the rear, the stage's bare boards arise. Yet in the production one feels lost on the island with Alonso's or Stephano's party, or that one is with Ferdinand, hauling wood.

Ariel and the spirits are presented as masks held by actors at arm's

length. Because Prospero and the other characters address the masks, the audience focuses on the apparent dialogue of mask and actor, while the movements of the actor without a mask and the actor with one generate through motion and rhythm a sense of wonder appropriate to the play. The storm scene opening *The Tempest* introduces the technique, where the spirits hold masks with one hand while creating the effects of the storm with their free hand—hammering Oriental gongs, shaking sheet metal, and rhythmically creating wave patterns by billowing a blue cover over the forestage. The music by Philip Rosenberg, so instrumental in the action of the play, is eerie, simple, and lyrical, inducing the varied responses to it by such folk as Ferdinand and Caliban.

The masque, with its hand-held red Chinese dragons and ornate reflective Oriental costumes, was gorgeous, creating the movement from the mythic world of spiritual power to the visions of an agrarian ripeness and plenty. Barbara Beatty-Shrawder, Evelyn Carol Case, and Kate Ingram perform their roles as Iris, Ceres, and Juno with rhythmic formality, dignity, and grace, as the play celebrates an approaching marriage, agrarian virtue, and serves as harbinger to Prospero's renunciation of magic through the rewards of labor inspired by Ceres. But before magic can be renounced, it must be safe to do so, and with Caliban, Alonso, Antonio, and Sebastian about, to say nothing of the drunken Stephano and Trinculo, magic must be performed to educate, or at least frustrate, before it can be put aside.

Robert Browning's portrayal of Caliban shows the sympathetic side of the monster, especially in his appreciation of beauty, but also the frightening side, that which would rape Miranda and kill Prospero. Philip Pleasants' Prospero, frustrated in teaching Caliban, makes use of the creature's choices to arrange learning that sticks, as Caliban sees finally not only "How fine my master is!" (V. i. 262), but also, "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. 294-97)! Trinculo and Stephano are hard to take seriously as threats; their hunting in Act IV by spirits as dogs or hounds is enough to bring them to their senses.

Alonso's agony is, of course, the most highly wrought in the play. He is forced to grieve over a son he has been told is dead by those with him and harpy-Ariel, and he knows that this action is a response to his agreement to supplant Prospero. Alonso's grief and repentance, especially since he is played by an old man, seem genuine. What about Sebastian and Antonio, however? Have they gone through enough to justify their reconciliation with and forgiveness from Prospero? Is the threat of exposure to Alonso enough to keep them in check? In the

production Antonio and Sebastian, played by Earle Edgerton and Leonard Kelly Young, look like the cynical villains that they are. Philip Pleasants' Prospero knows that they must be kept in check by governance when magic is no longer a controlling force. In the final scene, Sebastian appears contrite, a man aware of overreaching. Antonio seems more ashamed of his behavior before Miranda than Prospero, however. Gonzalo's utopian project in Act II seems just that at play's end, ideal and unrealizable, as this production turns to frail goodness and virtue after magic. Perhaps this is the best that can be done with Prospero's temporary power. Philip Pleasants was marvelous as Prospero, juggling his cares and relating his frequently quoted observations with the agility and grace of a noble magician.

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga



THE • VPSTART • CROW

Please enter my subscription for two issues of

THE VPSTART CROW

For two issues, a subscription to both individuals and libraries is \$12.00. Send check or money order with subscription. Thank you.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Return to:

James Andreas
Editor, *The Upstart Crow*
Drury College
Springfield, Missouri 65802