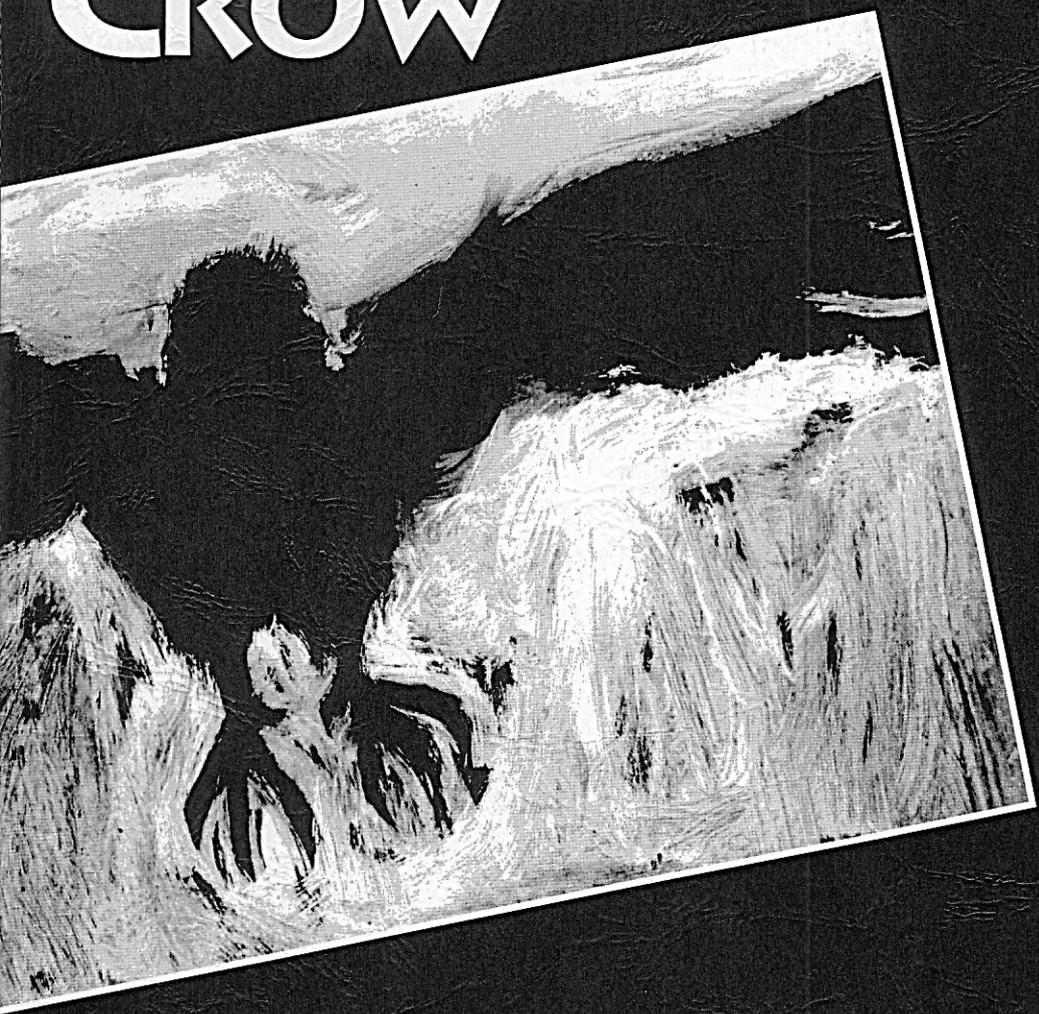


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About anyone so great as Shakespeare, it is probable that we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.

—T. S. Eliot

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

—Walter Pater

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

—Paul Valery

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A Crow Signals **by H. R. Coursen**

As I walk under a leafless oak,
a crow signals, not warning me. Its croak
tells his fellows that an alien
is patrolling the ice, the paleon-
tology of ruts and bootprints of winter
inscribed here by a printer
whose impression will erase
in April, without a trace.

Hearing the crow,
my effect on nature,
I am happy to know
that I am more than just a creature
tearing at an envelope of air. I have some say,
a voice, so to speak, on this cold January day.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Representations of Race in Renaissance Art

by Peter Erickson

I have to tell you at the outset that my title takes a position on a current scholarly debate defined by the question: can we talk about race in the Renaissance?¹ As the title announces, my answer is yes. But I want to change the question by shifting its emphasis to: how can we talk about race in the Renaissance?

Let me back up one step: why is the issue of race in the Renaissance even a question in the first place? The reason is a methodological problem concerning historical frameworks. The term race is most prominently associated with plantation slavery in the new world, a development that emerges on a massive scale only in the later seventeenth century. Thus we come up against a historical dividing line. Shakespeare is on the other side of the line before the advent of slavery. Race in the sense of plantation slavery is a post-Renaissance, post-Shakespearean phenomenon. This explains why we so often hear the objection that the idea of race in the Renaissance is anachronistic or—to use the dreaded word—unhistorical and therefore invalid.

Let me outline the three basic approaches to the question of race as a historical concept. The first approach says no. We cannot talk about race in the Renaissance because there is no concept of race prior to slavery. Accordingly, you will hear the claim that references to black-white color symbolism during the Renaissance are purely and exclusively religious metaphors for evil and good with absolutely no racial meaning. To my ears, this sounds like scholarly denial.

The second approach says yes. We can talk about race in the Renaissance, and we can force the issue by bending and collapsing the historical dividing line between Shakespeare and New World slavery. This move has the effect of making Shakespeare a vehicle for our own modern understanding of race. Such a view of Shakespeare strikes me as implausible. The American historical legacy of slavery and civil war, which has so deeply shaped our experience of race, was simply not part of Shakespeare's social context.

Fortunately, we are not limited to these two approaches. There is a third option! The third approach also answers yes to the question of race in the Renaissance, but it does so with a twist. It distinguishes between two different definitions of race: in addition to the familiar one linked to plantation slavery, it posits

another, historically earlier definition. I think that the examination of a specifically Renaissance definition is one of the most important contributions we can make to the overall historical study of race.

My starting point is the astonishingly early date of 1444. This year marks the moment when the Portuguese, under Prince Henry the Navigator, brought the first cargo of blacks from the West African coast to the European mainland. This event begins to answer the question of what race meant before the triangle trade. If the second definition of race focuses on the relations between Africa and the Americas embodied in the transatlantic slave trade, the first definition concerns the shipment of slaves in a direct route from Africa to Europe.

I can make this distinction visually by showing Turner's painting *Slave Ship* of 1840, a work that is fully informed by a knowledge of the Atlantic slave trade. The images I am going to be discussing this afternoon are concerned with racial differentiation but do not have this knowledge.

The etched work of Wenceslaus Hollar provides an ethnographic record of Europe's expanded contact with the rest of the world during the early modern period. From the examples listed in Richard Pennington's catalogue under the heading "Negroes, American Indian, Chinese, and a Turk" (316-19), one can sketch a global overview with four broad geographical and cultural sectors: Near Eastern, Far Eastern, Native American, and African. Here I show you two examples of Hollar's images of blacks from the seventeenth century. If we then turn back to two early sixteenth-century images by Dürer, we are looking at a continuous African visual presence in Northern Europe across a century-long span of the early modern period.

The creation of images of African blacks is a particularly instructive instance of the incorporation of non-Europeans in European Renaissance art. Two principal modes by which Africans entered the European visual imagination were nativity scenes in which one of the three wise men is depicted as black and portraits in which the central figure of the white patron is accompanied by a black servant. Though there is some overlap between the themes of submission, humility, and adoration in the worship of Christ in the Magi motif and the secular posture of domestic service, I shall focus on the latter as a separate and distinct strand.

Van Dyck's *William Feilding, 1st Earl of Denbigh* (c. 1633-34; London, National Gallery) portrays an Indian boy in the attendant role. Yet, when compared with van Dyck's *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi* (1623; Washington, National Gallery) and *Henrietta of*

Lorraine (1634; Kenwood, Iveagh Bequest), we see that the servant posture is more strictly observed in the case of blacks. Note the hovering effect: the black servant is so attuned to the white patron as to appear almost a literal physical extension of the patron's body. By comparison, the relation between Denbigh and the Indian boy is loose; far from being in sync, the two are shown at cross-purposes, pulling in separate directions.

As colonization of the Asian subcontinent developed in later periods, the servant role became more widely distributed across the range of non-European ethnicities. Examples of Indian servants include: Lely's *Lady Charlotte Fitzroy* (c. 1674; York City Art Gallery), Reynolds' *The Children of Edward Holden Cruttenden with an Indian Ayah* (1759-62; São Paulo, Museu de Arte), and Reynolds' *George Clive with his Family and an Indian Mayservant* (1765-66; Berlin, Staatliche Museen). But the basic stance of the servant of color was originated during the Renaissance largely in relation to African blacks. So ingrained is the convention of the servant figure as African that it can override ethnic accuracy, as in the case of *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (c. 1725; Collection of the Earl of Harrowby), where a black attendant appears in place of a Circassian one who would be "more appropriate" to her "specifically Turkish costume."

The figure of the black servant embodies a tension between the positions of subject and object. As a visualized human being, the servant appeals to us to see him or her as a person, a potential subject. As a clearly identified social subordinate and implied racial inferior, the servant is typecast in the role of object. By the second half of the eighteenth century, the black figure begins to emerge as an independent subject, a named individual who can be portrayed in his own right as, for example, in Reynolds' image of Samuel Johnson's servant Frank Barber (1767; Houston, Menil Foundation) and Gainsborough's image of the former slave Ignatius Sancho (1768; Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada). What makes these different from the images by Dürer and Hollar is the medium: the black men here are accorded the dignity of the elite medium of painting.

An earlier example is Rembrandt's *Two Negroes* of 1660. The richness of their costumes suggests that they may not be servants, but neither are they named. While we are drawn by the emotional depth conveyed by their faces, we cannot say who they are and hence we cannot fully know them. They remain generic, caught in a vague border area between particularized individual and abstract exercise. The overall tendency in Renaissance portraiture is to present the black attendant primarily not as subject but

as object—appurtenance, status symbol, exotic touch. Full-fledged individual identity is a distant future prospect at this historical juncture.

Lorne Campbell's authoritative *Renaissance Portraits* offers minimal commentary on the servant motif (54, 99, 134) and only one example of a black attendant (135) in an otherwise all-white repertoire of images. This outcome raises two questions, one quantitative and one qualitative. First, how accurate is the impression Campbell conveys about the image of black servants in terms of numerical frequency? Second, how much variation and inventiveness within the convention of the black-attendant motif is possible? In response, one can start by saying that the image of the black servant has been both underrepresented and underanalyzed. Paul H. D. Kaplan's study of this motif in Italian art, Marysa Otte's and Allison Blakely's surveys of Dutch art, and Kim F. Hall's discussion of British art combine to create an inventory that demonstrates that such images were produced in sufficiently large quantity to constitute a significant critical mass. The images I have selected for discussion here are only the tip of the iceberg. However, detailed interpretation of these images is stymied because the standard approach amounts to a fixed formula that assumes that the meaning of the black attendant is so self-evident and uniform that it requires little notice or explanation. No real progress is possible until the larger question of artist-patron relations in portraiture is reopened.

In the simplest version, a portrait is assumed to be a transparent translation and reflection of the patron's wishes; the portrait is conceived as a direct result of the patron's commission and the patron's financial control means interpretive control. According to this view, the artist's hands are tied because the artist cannot do anything to offend the sitter's self-image. Yet painting is more than a financial transaction. The literalistic economic model underestimates not only the power of the artist's resources but also the nature of that power. What tips the balance in the other direction is not so much the artist's deliberate effort at irony as the unaccountable complexities of art. In this sense, the issue is misleadingly formulated as an artist-patron tug of war because the complexity operates at a level below the patron's desire and the artist's intention. As Harry Berger, Jr. has shown in a breakthrough book on the analysis of portraiture, multiple and unpredictable meanings are built into the structure of the genre through the discrete layers of fiction involved in the concept of the pose. This multiplicity encourages us to steer clear of the Scylla of patron-driven idealized flattery and the Charybdis of

artist-driven satirical deflation in favor of a more impersonal third option beyond either's monolithic programmatic agenda.

Of course, this more sophisticated interpretive stance does not rule out the relatively straightforward cases of crude imperial assertion. The sightline directed from the black boy toward the white protagonist in William Dobson's *John, 1st Baron Byron* (c. 1643; University of Manchester) conveys an unqualified adulation that secures the full sweeping resonance of Anthony Wilton's term "swagger portrait" as it applies to this painting. One's swaggering military prowess is not complete unless it is witnessed and confirmed by one's black attendant. Similarly, in Mytens' *Prince Rupert of the Rhine* (c. 1665; Collection of the Duke of Hanover), the Prince's dual gesture of one hand grasping the baton and one hand resting atop the black boy's head proclaims a dominance whose acceptance is signaled by the servant's adoring eyes. Or the black boy's cooperation may be assured by literally relegating him to the background as in van Somer's *Anne of Denmark* (1617; Royal Collection) and Mytens' *Charles I and Henrietta Maria Depart for the Chase* (c. 1630-32; Royal Collection), where the servant is stationed behind the horse. Yet the purpose of an expanded interpretive framework for the black-attendant motif is not to deny the existence of such instances but rather to create a wider spectrum, with room for examples having very different, more complex effects. If the range of possibilities is broader, then the meaning of the black servant cannot be read as an automatic given but can only be determined by proceeding case by individual case.

A more complex and sympathetic early-modern perception of a servant of color is exemplified by Velázquez' *The Kitchen Maid with Christ at Emmaüs* (c. 1620; Dublin, National Gallery of Ireland), where the shift of perspective moves the black woman from periphery to center, thus enabling her to make a strong claim on our attention. Limits remain in place: she does not burst through the bounds of social rank and completely transcend her status as an object like the kitchen utensils with which she is identified. Rather, she presses up against or problematically straddles the boundary between subject and object, as though compelling us to see her two ways at once. The ambiguity hinges on the question of whether or not the black maid in the foreground can hear, or rather overhear, Christ speaking in the distance behind her. We don't know the answer. But our very doubt is the point. Raising even the possibility of a connection between the black woman and Christ raises the issue to the level of consciousness and thereby starts off a line of questioning.

Should she be included in Christ's community? If there is no basis for exclusion, why shouldn't she be included?

Similar uncertainty marks Frans Hals' *Family Group in a Landscape* (c. 1648; Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection) and David Bailly's *Vanitas with Negro Boy* (c. 1650; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art). In the former, the black boy servant's upfront positioning within the family lineup breaks with the decorum of either obsequious proximity or discreet distance. In the latter, the size of the white patron is literally reduced by encapsulation in the miniature held by the black boy, who in a kind of optical role reversal is correspondingly enlarged. In both cases, orthodox white-black power dynamics are called into question by visual innovations.

The implications of the black-servant motif are not confined to a subgenre of portraiture. As an indication of wider implications, I conclude with two further directions for this inquiry. The first concerns portrait-like situations in nonportrait genres. For example, in Rubens' *Diana and Callisto* (1637-38; Madrid, Prado), Diana and her black attendant form a white lady-black maid pair recognizable from this motif in portraits, except that the black woman here has greater latitude for assertive action. Not only does she exceed the usual expectations of servant behavior in her small corner of the larger scene, but her excess also arguably causes reverberations in the painting as a whole. I will show you a detail first. We see the standard unit of lady with attendant, but the roles are no longer confined and predictable. In the full painting the expanded frame opens up the social field, allowing the black woman to participate in a much more complex set of relationships.

There are two ways to see her. In version one, the black woman's social status as maid is clearly indicated by her cap, which stands out in contrast to the flowing hair of the rest of the women. Unlike the other women who all look toward Callisto, the black woman turns in the opposite direction, facing away from the center in order to focus on the dog who threatens at the very edge of the frame. Devotion to the protection of the mistress and operating on the margins are traditional attributes of the black-servant role.

Version two presents a different picture. Looked at from the standpoint of the narrative situation, the black woman is crucially involved in the central drama. Having violated the code of female chastity by her sexual relations with Jupiter, Callisto must leave the group. Far from ordering her banishment, Diana reaches out in passionate longing, as though to forestall the moment of departure. In this context, the black woman performs the function of blocking Diana's movement toward Callisto, thereby enforcing

a definitive break. The black attendant's decisive physical intervention also enacts her own claim on Diana. In effect, the black woman displaces and supplants Callisto.

Neither version of the black attendant cancels out the other. Our experience of going back and forth between the two ways of seeing her contributes to the unsettled quality, the continuing sense of disequilibrium, that this painting conveys.

The second area for widening implications involves the issue of white identity formation, white self-fashioning. Blackness, as one instance of non-European color, does not function as a racial signifier in isolation but is part of a relational symbolic system in which black is contrasted with, and thereby highlights and defines, white. This aspect of the black-servant motif can help attune us to the ways in which images of whites are shaped, even when black figures are absent as in van Dyck's Madagascar portrait (1639; Duke of Norfolk Collection), in which the Arundels project their colonial aspirations onto the island of Madagascar. In their facial expressions, whiteness is made visible, its bad faith palpable.

Discomfort is the most prominent emotion communicated by van Dyck's 1639 portrait. Neither the earl nor the countess appears happy in the role their joint venture calls for, with the result that what we see and feel is the effort, strain, and implausibility of their trying to be heroic. The countess' deployment of the compass parallels the earl's index finger as it targets the island. Yet, though they both point to the goal of their ambitious plan, neither can look at it. Nor can they look at each other. The earl turns in his wife's direction as though seeking reassurance, but their conspicuous lack of eye contact leaves the earl with a shifty, troubled look. The countess' composure comes across as a fixed stare that is made deliberately blank and vacant, as though a glazed expression could neutralize awareness.

The Madagascar portrait dramatizes not only the presumption of white privilege but also both its staged quality and its residual anxiety and guilt. The Arundels' dual expressions reflect visceral realization that their colonial dreams are licensed by their white identities. The Arundels did not need van Dyck to come from Antwerp to tell them they were white. They were already haunted by the knowledge of their whiteness.

I started off by suggesting that a fruitful strategy for interpreting race required two definitions, one for the post-Renaissance period and one for the Renaissance itself. I want quickly to revisit this point by asking: What is the relation between these two definitions? The two-definition model does not imply that the

Renaissance is completely self-contained with no historical carry-over. In a large-scale historical perspective I see a causal sequence: the first conception of race helped to make possible the second. In this interpretive sense, the dividing line I spoke of earlier must be breached. Although I have advocated widening the spectrum and complexity of the images of blacks possible in the Renaissance, I reject the notion that these images were entirely benign and positive. The spectrum includes an abundant fund of negative perceptions on which an ideology of slavery could subsequently draw.

Clark Art Institute

Notes

¹Lecture delivered at the seventh Clemson Shakespeare Festival, February 26, 1998. Bibliographical references for this lecture include: Harry Berger, Jr., *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999); Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: The Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1993); Lorne Campbell, *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990); Peter Erickson, "Representations of Blacks and Blackness in the Renaissance," *Criticism*, 35 (1993), 499-527; Kim F. Hall, "'An Object in the Midst of Other Objects': Race, Gender, Material Culture," in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995), 211-53; Hugh Honour, *The European Vision of America* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); Paul H. D. Kaplan, "Titian's 'Laura Dianti' and the Origins of the Motif of the Black Page in Portraiture," *Antichità Viva*, 21 (1982), no. 1, 11-18, and no. 4, 10-18; Marysa Otte, "'Somtijts een Moor': De Neger als Bijfiguur op Nederlandse Portretten in de Zeventiende en Achttiende Eeuw," *Kunstlicht*, 8, no. 3 (1987), 6-10; Richard Pennington, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etched Work of Wenceslaus Hollar, 1607-1677* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982); Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993); Gereon Sievernich and Hendrik Budde, eds. *Europa und der Orient, 800-1900* (Berlin: Berliner Festspiele, 1989); James Christen Steward, *The New Child: British Art and the Origins of Modern Childhood, 1730-1830* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995); Andrew Wilton, *The Swagger Portrait: Grand Manner Portraiture in Britain from Van Dyck to Augustus John, 1630-1930* (London: Tate Gallery, 1992).

Theological and Materialist Studies of Shakespeare by F. Elizabeth Hart

For years it has seemed that the goals of theological and materialist criticism in Shakespeare studies could not have been more distinct.¹ In her 1995 discussion of the differences between the theological critic Debora Shuger and the materialist critic Jean Howard, Katharine Eisaman Maus points to the defining difference between their respective historicist endeavors: While "Shuger believes that 'one gains very little by assuming that the culture under investigation did not itself comprehend the essential nature of its preoccupations,'" Howard is more willing to consider that "overtly stated intellectual commitments are best understood as symptoms of something that actually has a quite different psychic, political, or social causation."² Recently, however, critics from both sides of this methodological debate have begun to give credence to both positions, hoping, it seems, for the sake of a broader, richer, and more intellectually honest discipline, to forge a compromise between the two. In the past, theological critics have assailed the new historicism and cultural materialism for what is perceived to be their wholesale collapse of religious discourse into social or political practice.³ Such a critique has been, on the whole, justified. It gives one pause to consider, for instance, that an important work like Michael Bristol's *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* attempts an analysis of traditional festive culture without seriously entertaining Catholicism as an aspect of carnival's historical context.⁴ By the same token, however, the original reasons that so many turned away from formalist and "old" historicist schools—into which much theological criticism continues to fall—are still valid. To the extent that theological studies unquestioningly assume an etiology of culture that privileges religious experience over other kinds of experience; to the extent that the notion of human subjectivity in theological studies still assumes an essential, transhistorical core of identity; and to the extent that theological readings of texts remain embedded in formalist presuppositions about unity and coherence—then the basic materialist critique of theological studies will continue to hold sway. Yet there are a few small signs, in my opinion, of a new concord among critics,

evidenced by those on both sides who seem actively to be constructing a middle ground.

Let me begin by naming a handful among the materialist critics who, for various reasons, have sought to revitalize discussions about religious thought among theorists of early modern culture. I do so aware that what I perceive as critical "compromise" may not strike many theological scholars as in any way congenial to their projects, which may remain invested in convictions of the truth-value embedded in the early modern Christian text. This situation exists because those materialist critics newly embracing Reformation history are using Reformation theology to further their essentially *materialist* goals of exploring the period's ever-shifting representations of social and political power. To this end, the various strains of religious thought—orthodox Protestant, Puritan, recusant Catholic—are treated as distinct *ideologies* competing among other ideological systems in a highly contested struggle for symbolic authority.⁵ To offer examples, Robert Weimann, in a study that pulls together years of influential, previously published essays, asserts in *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* that the "various Protestantisms" emerging from the Reformation spawned an uncontrolled dispersal of authority, a sudden and unexpected multiplicity of something that had once been singular and stable. This dispersal, resulting from the Protestant emphasis on private interpretation of scripture, inspired the nascent "author-function"—the literary writer infused with a new sense of "ownership"; new and diverse representations of authority; and perhaps most subtly, the development of an unprecedented aesthetic of representation-*as*-authority, in which the act of interpreting itself *became* authoritative, a "springboard for cultural change."⁶ Alan Sinfield covers similar ground in *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*, except that his interest lies more specifically with tenets of Calvinist doctrine that may have contributed to the construction of a "Reformation subject."⁷ Faced with his or her complete loss of control in a Calvinist universe, Sinfield argues, the Reformation subject responds in two ways, by cultivating a complex "interiority" through which to "savor the nuances of one's spiritual condition," and, ironically *through* this cultivation of interiority, by developing an awareness of personal autonomy that is sufficient, when translated to the collective, to sustain revolutionary consciousness—organizations of like-minded reformers whose ethos of spiritual affinity and cooperation gave rise to the modern political party.⁸ Not unlike Weimann and Sinfield, Katharine Eisaman Maus, too, rehearses materialist concerns

with subjectivity, insisting on the historical phenomenon of an early modern interiority or “inwardness” in her *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance*. Polemically situating herself against other materialist critics who deny or diminish a “modern” consciousness of subjectivity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Maus argues that the issue, at least from the perspective of Reformation discourse, was not so much whether or not subjective interiority existed, but how exactly it was to be interpreted within domains such as, for instance, the judicial system, where the contents of a person’s mind might constitute evidence in a court of law.⁹ Perhaps more than any point of critical debate, this interest in the possibility of a private subjectivity, common to all three critics but most cogently articulated in Maus, opens the way for cross-fertilization between materialist critics intent on defining an early modern political “agency” and theological critics examining the period’s literary representations of “conscience.” If critics of both types are willing, in the long run, to grant the legitimacy of both sets of critical goals, then the difference among critics may eventually amount to little more than a difference in vocabulary.

Others embracing religious issues for essentially materialist purposes include the two critics most often credited with developing the new historicism in the first place: Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose. Greenblatt, whose early essay “Invisible Bullets” remains notorious among theological critics to this day, has recently returned to early modern religious discourse in a study of sixteenth-century Eucharist debates, in which he locates the very foundations of a modern epistemology of representation: “[V]irtually all of the terms used to describe the indescribable—the Real . . .—are terms that not [sic] simply resemble but rather emerge from the fevered attempts in the late Middle Ages and Early Modern period to theorize the Eucharist.”¹⁰ In *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre*, Montrose includes, in a broad-based analysis of the relationship between Shakespeare’s theater and the state under Elizabeth, a very specific claim about the quasi-ritualistic experience late-sixteenth-century theater must have provided for its audience. The theater, writes Montrose, offered in secular form a “substitute for the metaphysical aid of the medieval church”:

[I]n a society in which the dominant social institutions and cultural practices were predicated upon an ideology of unchanging order and absolute obedience, an emergent commercial entertainment that was still imbued with the heritage of suppressed popular and

religious traditions could address vital collective needs and interests that those dominant institutions and practices had sought to appropriate or to suppress, or had merely ignored."¹¹

Theological critics might find this configuration about the actual mix of old and new “needs and interests” in the aftermath of the Reformation naive; or perhaps they would perceive it as propagating a sacred/secular binary that theological critics themselves now contest, judging from the discussion in a seminar devoted to the Reformation at the 1997 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. Despite such objections, however, it is significant, given the extent to which materialist criticism has downplayed the role of religion, that the ultimately political statement of a critic like Montrose is grounded in a sympathetic conception of the large-scale cultural force that mystical communal experience represents.¹²

Thus, for materialist critics, compromise takes the form of acknowledging that religion represented a viable—and possibly determinant—force in the life of the early modern subject, and of finding ways, therefore, to integrate Reformation theology and politics into material models of early modern culture.¹³ However, for theological critics, compromise takes nearly the opposite form: that of allowing room for consideration of the social, economic, and political forces that must at least partly determine the content of religious belief. Such compromise requires fresh willingness, on the part of the theological critic, to situate religious matters within a broader historical context than that envisioned by an “old” historicism, and to suspend the complex difficulties of cause and effect—the questions of which cultural forces are primary and which should be analyzed as effects of other forces—that this strategy implies. Examples of two such theological critics are Huston Diehl and Anthony Dawson, whose comfort and familiarity with materialist approaches lend a unique credibility to their critiques of those approaches,¹⁴ and whose discussions of early modern culture differ from those of materialist critics not in terms of whether or not they situate religion contextually but over the *degree* to which they contextualize religion relative to social, economic, and political forces. Diehl and Dawson both declare a debt to Debora Shuger’s 1990 study, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture*, a work that addresses the fact that theological critics have been put on the defensive and that posture provides, in response, a spirit of

limited critical accommodation, an acknowledgment of the need for theoretical shift.¹⁵

Diehl's work noticeably demonstrates this willingness toward shift, and as a result her recent study, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, poses interesting challenges to materialist and theological critics alike. Diehl refutes New Critical models of late sixteenth century English Christianity—models predicated on assumptions of aesthetic and theological unity, such as those implied in the earlier studies of Roy Battenhouse and Herbert Coursen, Jr.—and asserts instead that "Reformation controversies" created an atmosphere rife with discursive contestation and ideological representation.¹⁶ Using a distinctly materialist (and even, on occasion, a deconstructive) vocabulary of "destabilization," "rupture," "mystification," and "containment," Diehl borrows a new historicist model of social and political struggle to describe theatrical representations of post-Reformation cultural dis-ease:

Contending that Renaissance tragedies employ a Protestant rhetoric that is both *destabilizing* and transformative, I treat the drama of Elizabethan and Jacobean London as one arena in which the *disruptions*, conflicts, and radical changes wrought by the Protestant Reformation are publicly explored.

(emphasis added)¹⁷

Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies articulate the anxieties created by Protestant assaults on medieval piety, but I do not believe that they are hostile to Protestantism or particularly sympathetic to the old religion. Although they sometimes stage the forbidden rituals and spectacles of the traditional Church, they typically do so in order to *demystify* and *contain* them.

(emphasis added)¹⁸

As a result of transformed "modes of perception and knowledge," Shakespeare and his contemporaries developed a "uniquely Protestant theater," writes Diehl, representing, in a new aesthetics of performance, the ideological content of both Catholic and Protestant "rituals, spectacles, and dramas."¹⁹ Diehl situates her project alongside those of Greenblatt, Martha Tuck Rozett, Bryan Crockett, Jeffrey Knapp, and James Siemon, critics she cites as participating in a "growing awareness that the religious beliefs and practices, as well as the religious institutions, of Elizabethan and Jacobean England inform [issues of stagecraft]."²⁰ Her emphasis, therefore, is on religious discourse as a cultural determinant, but the framework and rhetoric of her cultural poetics are comfortably materialist.

Dawson is more critical than Diehl of materialist assumptions, but in his own critical practice he seems deeply influenced by the kinds of questions that derive from a materialist orientation. For instance, in his recent essay "Performance and Participation: Desdemona, Foucault, and the Actor's Body," Dawson's contribution to performance theory includes a critique of the ways in which discourse theory, as a tool for the materialist critic, erases the body of the human subject and thereby effaces the function of the actor's body in the act of theatrical representation.²¹ Rather than avoid the debate on subjectivity that lies at the center of this issue, Dawson actively engages with it by seeking to construct a middle ground between "the essentialist view that acting is 'pure presence' . . . and the meta-theatrical / or materialist notion that the body is *mere* representation . . . and hence emptied of its meaningfulness as physical presence."²² He derives his theoretical middle ground from sixteenth-century theological discourse on the Eucharist, specifically from the "Anglican position" of Richard Hooker that locates Eucharistic meaning in a process of "presencing" or "participating" in Christ's body and blood through ingestion of the Communion wafer.²³ In so doing, Dawson stresses the physicality of subjectivity and representation to a degree that, he claims, surpasses even those materialist historicists whose emphasis ostensibly lies in the concrete (as distinct from the ideational abstract) traces of early modern history. Noting inadequacies in recent materialist approaches to the "new bodyism" (as he calls it) by Thomas Laqueur, Nancy Vickers, Peter Stallybrass, Francis Barker, and Gail Kern Pastor, Dawson asks, "Should [these critics'] rush to the body be regarded as an attempt to break through the tyranny of a rigid dualism? Or is it in fact a subtle reinstatement of that tyranny?"²⁴

One of the issues driving debate among theological critics—that of how to characterize the exact mixture of old, reformed, and radically reformed religious practice and belief in the period—reveals much of potential interest to materialist critics, especially if the issue is stated not in absolute terms but in terms of ideological contestation. For instance, in opposition to Eamon Duffy's thesis about the resilience of Catholicism in post-Reformation English culture,²⁵ Diehl argues that signs in Shakespeare and his contemporaries of hostility to the ritualized visual image effectively characterize the period's dominant religious ethos as Protestant. Dawson disagrees, siding cautiously with Duffy and stating that "[Diehl's] view of the drama as ideologically attuned to the dominant Protestant line itself needs . . . to be tempered." "It would be better," he goes on, "to regard the drama as

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reflexively staging the conflict about images . . . while remaining skeptical about audience susceptibility and the relation of visual power to meaning."²⁶ The ambiguities revealed by these critics' differences parallel similar contradictions in the materialist works of, say, Sinfield, whose early modern subjects dwell in a decidedly Calvinist world, versus those of Montrose, who attend the theater out of nostalgic longing for the forms and rites of the old religion. Embedded in this one example are discussions of mutual concern to both sets of critics: (1) the impact of sixteenth-century iconoclastic violence on the literary status of the image; (2) the related problem of representation—how much power of persuasion we should grant it, whether or not to characterize it as subversive or capable of containment or as manifesting some combination of the two (as Greenblatt would suggest); and (3) the anthropological dimension of ritual inherent in all spectacle but of particular relevance to Elizabethan and Jacobean theater. I have tried to state these preoccupations in critically neutral terms in hopes of demonstrating their pertinence to both critical paradigms despite their ongoing theoretical differences.²⁷

Finally, in addition to these limited signs of critical synchronicity, there is one important way in which theological and materialist approaches may converge: that is, through their mutual investment in an interdisciplinary methodology. Theological studies of Shakespeare have long been interdisciplinary by definition since much of the knowledge brought into this area has depended on the work of various historians (e.g., social historians, church historians, historians of philosophy). Those historians serving as sources for today's theological critics—Patrick Collinson, Steven Ozment, Peter Lake, and Christopher Haigh, to name some—are highly specialized compared to Lawrence Stone, Christopher Hill, Keith Thomas, and others to whom materialist critics turn. Nevertheless, their shared interdisciplinarity connotes a mutual conviction that literary meaning is contingent upon a context, whether that context is one of abstract belief or of the more concrete realm of material practice and experience. But even more significant than this reliance on history is the increasing convergence of those critics toward cultural anthropology, quite apparent in the new work of some theological scholars. Although Diehl is by no means the only example, her work offers a strong case in point. In the first paragraph of the introduction to her *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage*, Diehl summarizes her method as follows:

Drawing on the insights of symbolic anthropologists who believe that religious practices help shape both individual consciousness and cultural forms, I show how the popular London theater that flourished in the years after Elizabeth reestablished Protestantism in England rehearses the religious crisis that disrupted, divided, energized, and in many ways revolutionized English society.²⁸

The anthropologists she then cites, Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner, are the same, in fact, who have long shaped the vision of the new historicists.²⁹ While one might suspect that differences in semantics and in conceptions of cause and effect will continue to distinguish theological and materialist critics from one another, these and other signs indicate that their scholarly *goals* may eventually coincide, if not in the field of literary theory/criticism then in the wider field of cultural studies.

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¹To clarify my terms, by “theological criticism” I mean analyses that address the specific domain of religious practice and belief in Renaissance English culture, whether the goal is to investigate the content of early modern religious discourse or to provide formalist readings (generally in the New Critical vein) demonstrating texts’ aesthetic realizations of mystical experience. I use the term “materialist criticism” to denote a wide range of approaches that include the new historicism, cultural materialism, materialist feminism, and other kinds of historical studies aimed at reconstructing ideological patterns of authority and alienation (in texts and in early modern culture at large) through discourses of race, ethnicity, and sexuality. Importantly, the terms “theological” and “materialist” in this context are *not* parallel to the terms “sacred” and “secular.” Rather, the terms denote different emphases on different kinds of discourses within the same period. Materialist readings emphasize the primacy of people’s material circumstances in their day-to-day efforts to construct meaning in their lives—meaning that may *include* religious meaning. While the cause-and-effect of a materialist criticism may differ from that of a theological criticism, which assumes the primacy of religious ideas in the construction of meaning, the difference does not necessarily make “materialism” synonymous with the “secular.”

²Katharine Eisaman Maus, “Renaissance Studies Today,” *ELR*, 25 (1995), p. 407, quoting from Debora Kuller Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1990).

³See, for instance, Tom McAlindon’s critique of Stephen Greenblatt’s essay “Invisible Bullets” in “Testing the New Historicism: ‘Invisible Bullets’ Reconsidered,” *Studies in Philology*, 92 (1995), 411-38.

⁴See Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985). At the beginning of Chapter 3, Bristol details correspondences between festive events and specific dates associated with the Catholic church's liturgical calendar; but because his focus is on the anthropology of carnivalesque ritual, neither the word "Catholic" nor any description of Catholic theology appears in his analysis. Even supporting the logic of Bristol's neo-Marxist methodology, one cannot help but find such an omission remarkable.

⁵The extent to which these critics now consider religious discourse as one of many forms of ideology—and one at some level distinct from the political—is illustrated by the following from Alan Sinfield's *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), p. 144: "No ideology can contain all the issues it suggests, let alone those that might occur around or beyond its ostensible boundaries. Reformation orthodoxy was contested, eventually to the point where it was pushed to the margins of English thought. Nonetheless, around 1600 it was an overwhelmingly important part of the ideological field and had to be taken into account, not least by those who distrusted it."

⁶Robert Weimann, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 3, 14, 15, 12-13, 17-21, 11.

⁷By "subject" materialist critics generally mean the passive recipient of linguistically transmitted social determinants—no longer the "human" or the "individual" of the liberal humanist tradition, but the "inscriptee," as it were, of a complex of cultural codes or signs that determine what we think of as identity. As such, subjective identity is arguably almost entirely a function of social contingencies (i.e., the subject's position relative to his or her class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnic origin), although counter claims for the relative agency of the subject within the system have flourished in recent years. The term "subjectivity" plays on this state of being "subjected" to the system of cultural determinants.

⁸Sinfield, pp. 159, 174-80.

⁹Katharine Eisaman Maus, *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 2-3, 104-27.

¹⁰Stephen Greenblatt, "Remnants of the Sacred in Early Modern England," in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, eds. Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), p. 338.

¹¹Louis Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 31, 39.

¹²See, for instance, Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing*, pp. 104-05, where he includes the ritualistic dimension of Shakespeare's drama in his term "theatricality," which for him defines the key interface between the theater and the political forces that would seek to contain it. "In this precise and limited sense [of theatricality], Shakespearean drama as enacted in the Elizabethan theatre formally contested the dominant ideological assertions of the Elizabethan state."

¹³Here I concur with Maus, who writes: "[R]ecently, 'ideology critics' seem newly willing to re-examine religious categories as something more complex and more interesting than crude mystification" (*"Renaissance Studies Today,"* p. 402).

¹⁴Some do not bother to confront materialist theory and therefore offer little in the way of thoughtful engagement. Raphael Falco, for instance, is especially candid about this tendency in *Conceived Presences: Literary Genealogy in Renaissance England* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1994), p. 98, when he writes, "In the course of [this] chapter I have indicated my skepticism about reading poetry for its social dimension, though I have not attempted to offer a systematic critique of New Historicism or cultural materialism."

¹⁵Shuger, a self-professed Christian (*The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994], p. 1), makes no bones about her displeasure with materialist critics' ignorance, mishandling, and denial of the importance of early modern theological discourse. Yet unlike many others who share her opinion, she has gotten her point across by actively engaging with materialist criticism and thereby confronting it from within. An indication of the success of this strategy is the fact that *Habits of Thought* was published through a series entitled "The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics," edited by Stephen Greenblatt, whose other titles include works by notable materialist critics Leah Marcus, Jonathan Crewe, Alan Sinfield, Greenblatt, and others.

¹⁶Huston Diehl, *Staging Reform, Reforming the Stage: Protestantism and Popular Theater in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1997), p. 2.

¹⁷Diehl, p. 4.

¹⁸Diehl, p. 5.

¹⁹Diehl, pp. 4-5. Diehl even refers to Protestantism as an "ideology" (p. 1).

²⁰Diehl, pp. 6-7.

²¹Anthony B. Dawson, "Performance and Participation: Desdemona, Foucault, and the Actor's Body," in *Shakespeare, Theory, and Performance*, ed. James C. Bulman (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 29-30, 37.

²²Dawson, p. 37.

²³See Dawson.

²⁴Dawson, p. 31.

²⁵See Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992).

²⁶Anthony B. Dawson, "'No More Sights: Memory, Spectacle, and Iconoclasm in the Elizabethan Theatre,'" p. 7, unpublished essay submitted for a seminar entitled "The Reformation" at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, Washington, D.C.

²⁷Recent studies concerned with these issues include: James R. Siemon, *Shakespearean Iconoclasm* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985); Ernest B. Gilman, *Iconoclasm and Poetry in the English Reformation: Down Went Dagon* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986); Patrick Collinson, *From Iconoclasm to Iconophobia: The Cultural Impact of the Second English Reformation* (Reading: Univ. of Reading Press, 1986); Joan P. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987); Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989); and Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992).

²⁸Diehl, *Staging Reform*, p. 1.

²⁹A scan through the indexes of a number of recent works, including Weimann's *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, Montrose's *The Purpose of Playing*, and the very recent *A New History of Early English Drama*, eds. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), shows a continuing reliance on Geertz and Turner, but particularly on Geertz, by materialist critics. Vincent Pecora offers an extended analysis of the impact of Geertz's work on the new historicism in his essay, "The Limits of Local Knowledge," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Vesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 243-76.

Shakespeare the Survivor: Or, Shakespeare and the Politics of the Curriculum

by Martha Tuck Rozett

Teachers of English have much to disagree about these days, but no one seems opposed to the enduring popularity of Shakespeare. Unlike all of those other once-canonical texts that are not longer taught in high school and college English courses, or taught so infrequently and in such short excerpts as to be nearly invisible, Shakespeare has survived—and indeed—flourished. If you take a long look backward at the teaching of English literature in America, Shakespeare is virtually the only constant in an ever-changing curriculum. Just as our parents or grandparents studied Shakespeare and Dickens and Wordsworth, and we studied Shakespeare and Hawthorne and Dickinson, so the current generation of students studies Shakespeare and Toni Morrison and Amy Tan. One could argue that these changes over time are based on aesthetic judgments, but I think most of us would agree that they are also caused by “the politics of the curriculum,” a much talked about issue in the current academic scene.

In English departments like mine, at a mid-sized state university, the curriculum is in constant flux, ever sensitive to the shifting winds of academic politics and changes in student tastes. Curricular reform may occur officially every five or ten years, but unofficially it occurs each semester as courses are scheduled and numbers of seats are assigned. A department that gradually shifts from offering, say, two hundred seats in British literary survey courses to offering half that number has quietly made the curricular decision to deemphasize Beowulf and Chaucer and other canonical authors in favor of something else. On my campus, for example, the English department now offers multiple sections of an immensely popular course called “Growing Up in America,” which was designed several years ago to fulfill a university-wide “human diversity” requirement that attempts to make students aware and tolerant of difference, or diversity—which is another way of saying that it tries to combat prejudice and insensitivity. Nearly all of the literary texts students read in this course have been written in the last few decades, and they are chosen to prompt reflection and discussion about what it is like to grow up female, or gay, or Asian-American or African-American in America. This is not the only course in the curriculum, needless to say, that reflects current social and political concerns.

As student demand for a course like "Growing Up in America" increases, teachers who once taught literary period courses may find themselves teaching this one; or more likely, when the authority on Pope and Swift retires, the department will hire three adjuncts who each teach a section or two of "Growing up in America." The politics of the curriculum thus becomes complicit in the economics of academic hiring, and the department gradually assumes a different configuration in respect to its permanent staff and their areas of expertise.

Meanwhile, the four or five sections of Shakespeare we offer each semester are holding their own; students who read a few Shakespeare plays in high school are signing up in respectable, sometimes even record numbers, and many of them arrive on the first day of class quite familiar with the plots and characters of several plays. In New York state, the standard pattern in middle and high schools is to teach *Romeo and Juliet* in eighth or ninth grade, followed by *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* in the upper grades. I have found, though, that many other Shakespeare plays turn up in high school courses, and that some schools even offer short elective courses on Shakespeare. The rest of the high school English curriculum, however—with the exception of AP English—often consists of a handful of contemporary books chosen largely for their social content, not unlike the novels assigned in "Growing Up in America." The unspoken and perhaps unacknowledged principle behind this mix of readings is that Shakespeare can serve as the representative or stand-in for all the other pre-nineteenth century British authors, and often, the American ones as well.

This trend carries over to some college curriculums: it is not unusual for college students, including our English majors at Albany, to know little or nothing about Chaucer or Milton, not to mention Donne or Dryden or Thackeray, but to have read a wide range of twentieth-century texts from all over the world. Because very little in their previous experience with language has prepared them for Shakespeare, our students sometimes liken reading Shakespeare to reading a foreign language. Teaching Shakespeare can become an exercise in translation—whole class periods are easily given over to making sense of a particularly dense stretch of wordplay and allusions. I have no doubt that Shakespeare classes were a challenge for the generations of teachers who preceded us, but they are a different kind of challenge now, for the Shakespeare who has survived the culture wars and curricular reforms of the last two decades is a Shakespeare cut off from his contemporaries, his predecessors, and his immediate

successors. A passing reference to Christopher Marlowe or Thomas Kyd, or to Plutarch or Virgil or Montaigne, is incomprehensible without an explanatory digression. If we find ourselves treating Shakespeare as a solitary genius—a trap I swore I would avoid when I began teaching—we do so because there just isn't enough time to place him in context.

Just now I used the pronoun "him" in reference to Shakespeare, something I generally try to avoid doing. For many of us teaching English in the 1990's, the word "Shakespeare" has become a convenient name for a body of plays that were very likely composed through a communal process the details of which we may never be able to reconstruct. Because we know so little about the Shakespeare who lived and wrote in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, we tend *not* to think of him as an identifiably white, male, patriarchal British author. Those participants in the canon wars who judge writers by their sexual politics, by their relationships with families, friends, lovers or colleagues, have very little to work with when it comes to Shakespeare—in contrast, say, to Milton, about whose treatment of his wives and daughters we know rather too much for comfort. As we often tell our students, there is no single voice in a Shakespeare play that can be reliably identified with the playwright's, despite the efforts of countless readers who have tried to find one. Perhaps Shakespeare is a survivor of the cultural politics of our time because he—or they? or she?—is unknowable and cannot be associated with a particular political or ideological view.

The mystery or ambiguity that surrounds Shakespeare the writer—including the ongoing efforts of the Oxfordians and others to prove that he did not write the plays—has had a number of secondary effects. For example, I suspect that the large generation of women who emerged from graduate school in the 1970's and 1980's have found it more acceptable to devote a career to Shakespeare than to other male writers. And so, while many aspects of British literature have lost graduate students to emerging specialties in which women writers predominate, the field of Shakespeare studies is larger than ever, with as many women scholars under the age of forty, I dare say, as men. Many women have found ways to write about Shakespeare in conjunction with the hitherto-unknown women writers of the English Renaissance, and some have gone on to incorporate texts by women into their undergraduate courses, as the recent *Shakespeare Quarterly* issue called "Teaching Judith Shakespeare" attests.¹ In doing so, they have been able—like their colleagues in other fields—to introduce women writers into reading lists that had once consisted entirely

of male-authored texts, thus participating in one of the main political objectives of curricular reform—but with one foot still planted solidly in the literary canon. Everyone who has tried to assemble a thirteen-week syllabus knows the difficulties that attend on such inclusiveness, however. At moments like this I recall the opening line of Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," a once-widely-anthologized seduction poem now probably considered offensive in some quarters. The line is "Had we but world enough and time." There is never time enough to include every writer or text you would like your students to read. Do you teach fewer Shakespeare plays so that you can include Elizabeth Cary's "Tragedy of Mariam"? That's a hard call.

By now some of you are wondering when I will get to the most obvious reason for Shakespeare's survival in an age of politically driven curricular change. Hollywood makes movies of his plays! And there are touring companies and Shakespeare theatres and festivals in nearly every state and major city in North America—Hardy Cook lists 54 of them in the Spring 1996 *Shakespeare Newsletter*,² and I'm sure there are others, some too new to have made it into the listings. Shakespeare is the only canonical author I can think of whose work is regularly experienced in a visual, festive, communal setting with actors and directors and designers mediating between the printed word and the audience to bring the text to life. One could say that the existence of all these performances is more a consequence than a cause of Shakespeare's popularity, but I would argue that Shakespeare has surpassed other writers as a subject of academic study partly because the plays are available in live and filmed performances that appeal to large and heterogeneous audiences. High school teachers, in my experience, seek out audio-visual supplements to the printed page, for they know that young people who have grown up with television and movies are often more responsive to visual images than to books and have become sophisticated analysts of the subtleties of performance. The recent spate of commercially successful Shakespeare films thus increases the likelihood that Shakespeare will continue to appear on high school reading lists, even when something needs to be cut to make room, perhaps, for the new unit on ethnicity.

Similarly, because Shakespeare's cultural authority and name recognition make the plays attractive choices for field trips and cultural enrichment activities, the production of Shakespeare for students continues to be an increasingly visible presence on the American art scene. Many repertory theatre companies in New York and elsewhere around the country have spawned a sizeable

secondary mission of providing school performances, workshops, summer and afterschool programs, and internships designed for gifted and/or underprivileged young people. Shakespeare is credited with everything from helping to revitalize decaying downtowns to providing access to the verbal culture of standard English to serving as a vehicle for self-exploration through theatrical improvisation. These initiatives are able to leverage a significant amount of government and private foundation support by invoking Shakespeare's authority and universal name recognition. As other, more experimental theatre may fall victim to the trend towards censorship in arts funding, Shakespeare, the survivor, seems eminently worthy of support by comparison.

This abundance of performances makes it easier to teach Shakespeare than most other authors. Many of my students come from in or around New York City, and even if they have never attended a play before (and a surprisingly large number haven't), they know about Shakespeare on or off Broadway or in Central Park. By assigning performance reviews as required writing assignments, I can give them the push they need to go to the theatre. When students see a performance by a touring company like Shenendoah Shakespeare Express on their own time and at their own expense, it becomes something more than a school assignment. Often they bring friends, and they acquire a sense of ownership in the experience, comparable to their ownership in other choices they make about the leisure-time activities on which they spend their money. And I am happy to say that students *will* spend their own money to see Shakespeare. With the explosion of what Michael Bristol, in his book *Big Time Shakespeare*, calls Shakespeare's versatility as a cross-over artist,³ students are more and more likely to seek out Shakespeare films on their own, for his status receives validation from the popular actors who have associated their names with plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. The success of Shakespeare at the box office creates an ever-widening and self-perpetuating audience, thus guaranteeing Shakespeare's survival as so many other classics disappear from both the curriculum and our shared culture.

As Shakespeare has survived so those of us who have devoted our careers to teaching and writing about Shakespeare have survived the changes our profession has experienced in the last twenty or thirty years. I often teach Shakespeare on the introductory level to students seeking to fulfill a general education requirement in the humanities. Even though my course is not considered a "human diversity" course, it is expected to "acquaint students with multiple perspectives of human society" and "help [students]

understand the pluralistic nature of communities and cultures.” Although I haven’t consciously adjusted my teaching style in accordance with these criteria, I do teach Shakespeare differently than I did twenty-five years ago, and that is as it should be. I also teach two upper-level Shakespeare courses designed primarily for English and Theatre majors that satisfies the English department’s “author course” requirement, a requirement that can be fulfilled by taking an entire semester devoted to Virginia Woolf or Ernest Hemingway—or Shakespeare. The rationale for this requirement is that reading extensively in the work of one writer is a good idea—and it is. But whereas the other authors are taught sporadically, according to faculty tastes and research interests, Shakespeare is a regular presence in the curriculum, a predictable course offering students can plan to take well in advance. Such are the economics and psychology of course-taking patterns that simply by being offered regularly, the Shakespeare courses acquire a reputation and a following—not to mention a ready supply of second-hand textbooks. At Albany, perhaps a third of our English majors take a class in Shakespeare, and the course is more enjoyable to teach because the students have chosen it themselves.

And they choose Shakespeare, in part, because Shakespeare is all around them, from the Saturday morning cartoons to phrases in advertising jingles and newspaper headlines. The language and characters and themes of Shakespeare’s plays have been absorbed into American culture to a degree equalled by no other body of texts, except the Bible—and not just American culture, for the plays have insinuated themselves into the vocabularies and cultures of peoples around the world, including marginalized writers like the Jewish playwright Arnold Wesker or the Caribbean playwright Aimé Césaire, who in turn has written plays that talk back to and through Shakespeare. The word “Shakespeare” has thus come to stand for a multiplicity of offshoots, appropriations and parodies, some quite subversive, that place Shakespeare at once inside and outside of the traditional canon. Reading, writing about, and teaching these instances of what I call “talking back” in my book *Talking Back to Shakespeare*⁴ has been a way for me to survive and grow as a Shakespeare scholar during the past ten or twelve years. This approach to the intertextuality among old and new texts, to the way writers rewrite their predecessors, has given me and the graduate program in which I teach a whole new perspective on the writing process and the social construction of literary history, as well as an opportunity to read contemporary, non-canonical authors while still continuing to talk about Shakespeare.

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Indeed, I feel a certain sense of survivor guilt, when I compare my career to the careers of colleagues in other fields. It has been my great good fortune to be able to write about the plays I teach, and teach the plays I write about to students who range from fourth graders to senior citizens, and to enjoy an abundance of new films, stage productions, teaching resources, and topical references that I can incorporate into my courses. Had I been a Tennyson or *Beowulf* or George Eliot scholar, I would have had to devote most of my teaching energies to other writers, and I suspect I would have had to overcome a far greater degree of resistance from undergraduate students when I taught my own specialty. Shakespeare's survival has, in a very real way, meant my survival, and the survival of a large, flourishing community of scholars in an academic culture which too often compels scholarship and undergraduate teaching to become increasingly remote from one another.

State University of New York at Albany

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¹*Shakespeare Quarterly* ("Teaching Judith Shakespeare" Issue), 47 (1996).

²Hardy M. Cook, "Shakespeare Summer Festivals 1996," *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, 46 (1996), pp. 16-17.

³Michael D. Bristol, *Big-time Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 90.

⁴Martha Tuck Rozett, *Talking Back to Shakespeare* (Univ. of Delaware Press, 1994; rptd. NCTE, 1995).

Shakespeare's Lucky Banana Peel

by Robert D. Anson

This paper embraces three ideas, two of them fanciful. The starting point is an impression put into my noggin by Professor Andrew Patenall, Scarborough College of the University of Toronto, at one of his Stratford (Ontario) Summer Seminars. The daydreams flowing from his insight are of my making. Therefore, if you accept my part of the story—the dreamy, concocted part—your approval belongs to me. Should you reject my guesswork, blame my friend Andrew. Fair enough?

Andrew's idea was that as Shakespeare gained ground as a writer of plays on his own account—no longer the rewrite man—he was challenged by a "trade union" problem. The clowns in the company with which he was associated pressed him to maintain their roles as large, as conspicuous, as those by which they had carried the stage for some twenty years. In the comedies of the 1570's and 1580's the clowns were the stars, acclaimed for their extemporal wit, their tumbling and sight gags, and the high brilliance of their low humor. Naturally, they would protest any eclipsing of their sphere in an afternoon's glory. Nevertheless, Shakespeare was the poet whose goal would be to reduce¹ in comedy the prominence of clowning and slapstick, thereby enriching the narrative and poetic elements of dramatic art. Instinctively, he would undertake the mission of reshaping Elizabethan drama. Sonnet 82 echoes this intent: ". . . The dedicated words which writers use / Of their fair subject, blessing every book." By miraculous accidents of history, Shakespeare arrived in London in the early autumn of 1587.² It would prove to be the propitious moment in which to train himself "to produce the texts that, then as now," in Andrew's words, "stretched to the limit the powers of the professional acting companies." In a dozen or so years—the buffooning cut down, the language enskyed—his genius would carry poetic drama beyond beyond.

Chief clown of the repertory group was Will Kemp. Several years senior to the poet, Kemp functioned as if he were a shop steward for an unofficial guild within the enterprise. Think of it as a labor-local for a gang of clowns. As successor to the great Richard Tarlton, who had died in 1588, Kemp was immensely popular with all audiences; he certainly was *the* clown of the 1590's. Of powerful build, he was a short, burly fellow, possessing tremendous skills as clown, dancer, tumbler, singer,

impersonator—a virtuoso entertainer. He is also reputed to have possessed, as do so many performers, a tremendous ego. Be the ego large or small, actors have always nudged playwrights for bigger, choicer parts; Kemp, however, was simply obnoxious in his demands. Andrew painted a picture of Kemp backstage, growling at the poet on behalf of his colleagues and himself. Their roles de-emphasized, their prosperity threatened, they would complain to the company manager. The manager in 1592, when my fantasy opens, quite likely was James Burbage. I see Burbage caught between the senior clown demanding more and the reform-minded writer apportioning less.

My fantasies deal with two comedies directly involved in this clash with the clowns. These actual plays, together with my imaginary episodes, come about a quarter of the way into Will Shakespeare's play-writing career. And the protagonist of my conjectural off-stage drama is Will Kemp's big ego.

That miracle mission, Shakespeare's calling as a dedicated playwright, was just the reverse of Hamlet's complaint, "How all occasions do inform against me" (IV. iv. 32). For Will we must read "How all events conspire in my favor." Think of some of the fortunate factors to boost such a career when it took its first steps: Queen Elizabeth encouraging the English cultural renaissance; post-Armada secular theatre, in spite of Puritan antagonism, soon to enjoy long-term popularity and profitability; three (or more) London playhouses eager for first-rate scripts, new or newly revised; Will's incentive to succeed commercially because of his father's financial reverses (despite which comedown the father probably scraped up the needed grubstake). To this list of advantages for which Will was not responsible, we must add one pivotal event for which he was indeed responsible. It ought to have strangled his future; instead, with his accustomed luck, it would ripen into his immortality. I refer to his getting Anne Hathaway pregnant, and being forced to marry her. That's my reading of the evidence and of the inferences: a shotgun marriage. He was eighteen, she was twenty-six. To be compelled is bad enough, but for a man so young, and to a woman eight years older—pathetic! Worse, Miss Hathaway was without education, probably illiterate; as wife to the man destined to become the world's number one writer—scorpions! In Bertram's somber line the poet reveals piercing resentment: "Wars is no strife / To the dark house and the detested wife" (*AWW*, II. iii. 275). Will must have thought of himself as her prisoner and of his parent's Henley Street house as an embarrassing gaol. Yet that would be his very luck. The unhappy union spurred him to escape from Stratford.

In midsummer of 1587, thanks to an opening within a troupe of traveling players, he could at last excuse himself from facing such distress. Walking away from his vexations could be combined with a chance—nay, a duty, he might have argued—to prove his stage-struck ambitions, at first on the road, ultimately in the bustling capital. Ambition's wind is stirring. Petruchio speaks to that side of young Will's rationale: "Such wind as scatters young men through the world / To seek their fortunes farther than at home, / Where small experience grows" (*SHR*, I. ii. 47).

True, crafting non-dramatic poetry could have been compassed in Stratford, or elsewhere. For theatre expertise, however, and the ensuing specialty of creating plays, moving to London was a *sine qua non*. In *Henry V* Shakespeare recalls its uplift to his self-training, praising London as "the quick forge and working-house of thought" (V. chorus. 23). If no move to London, no such career. And consider this bad dream: A contented marriage to a modestly literate young charmer (by no means impossible) might have held him in Stratford, captive to her tasty cookery and other comforts, his stage ambitions fading. It follows, then, that the start of Shakespeare's career, extrinsically, owes almost everything to the relative age and the indiscretion of Farmer Hathaway's daughter. She unknowingly pushed him onto a road he might not have taken, save for that suffocating marriage. For your part in this chain of events, Anne Hathaway, we do thank you. You presented at just the fertile moment of history, and in just the seminal place in the English-speaking world, a fateful centerpiece to grab Will's attention, to focus his future out of the instant. Your readiness that hot August day in 1582 shoved him into a trap destined not to break him but to make him forever. Truly, Miss Hathaway, we remain in your debt. Yes, how all occasions did conspire favorably. These career happenings engendered luck for him, and hence for us.

More good luck is coming to him; this time, earned. To consider the first episode in my fantasy, visualize Shakespeare in the spring of 1592 tendering to Burbage & Company the manuscript of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.³ His earlier comedies, *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, had each cast several clown roles to generate a major part of the drawing card. With *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* the playwright moves toward a diminution of the clown tradition. Scanning the clown parts, Kemp files a grievance, insisting upon more clown roles, and of more heft. Picture Kemp and his gang on one side, Shakespeare opposite, with perhaps one or two of the principal actors near his side. Kemp tries to bully the poet. He pounds the table, reminding manager and author that the primary box-office appeal had

always come from the clowning. "We clowns are the big draw, and I'm the star. This piddling part is an insult to me—I wouldn't give it to a dog. And damn you, you have locked out most of my fellow clowns! Piss on you, Sir Poet Snake-smear!" This time his ego and his effrontery go too far. With forced civility the poet, age twenty-eight, responds: "Very well, Master Kemp, I'll consider what I might do for you." Alone in his room, however, he swears he will never allow players, even if they are idolized, to force changes in his playscripts. Though affable on the outside, his reputed gentleness conceals an inner toughness. At age eighteen he had been coercible; not so a decade later. Now he is a man unafraid to defend his prerogatives. Remember, he had rescued himself from the straits of Stratford. One can detect in him pride, mettle, resolve—a man capable of audacious action if vitally threatened. Hamlet's "the native hue of resolution" (III. i. 84) applies to him personally. Surely, being directed how to fashion his plays would be taken as a vital threat. Would he not determine to stifle such interference?—and without hesitation, for "courage mounteth with occasion," as he will tell us in *King John* (II. i. 82). I see him ready to humble this prickly actor, whose impudent language has even now hatched the idea for a shrewd countermeasure. The main clown role in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Launce, shall be expanded; the expansion, however, shall embody a theatrical dirty trick, a figurative banana peel for the stage. Bullying and brazenness shall be set down.⁴ The rescripting will fabricate an extension upon which the clown shall slip.

In this comedy each gentleman is attended by a wag, a clown whose dramatic purpose is to make honest comments about a dishonest master, or about a foolish one. Kemp's ego craved more such purpose than the role for Launce proffered in its presumed initial form. Thus the received text awards Launce two big scene-opening solos. For me, these speeches are afterthoughts, imperfectly joined to the rest of the work. That's my first clue about possible interference with the prior manuscript of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: afterthoughts. Second, these lines, wonderfully droll though they be, add nothing to dramatic tension or plot development. Rather, they are distinct comic pieces, removable without damage to the story: detachability is a clue. Third, Shakespeare's clown roles have not yet enjoyed scene-opening solos. Grumio in *The Taming of the Shrew* owns one, but brief and plot-driven. That's one more anomaly. Then the fourth peculiarity tickled my active suspicion. Both solos concern the misbehavior of, and are addressed to . . . a live dog! Can man compete on stage with man's best friend? To use a live dog as the motif of a pair of

extended speeches seems alien, not kin to the author's routine comic bits. He had employed puns, jokes, silliness, insults, misdirections, even slapstick. To feature a wayward animal, a scene-stealing mutt, is indeed an oddity. By my brief survey, this doggy trick occurs in Elizabethan stage history only in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Certainly it is unique in the Shakespeare canon. Bizarre, I say, unless by this aberration the playwright contrived to nettle Kemp, to warn him, indirectly, not to interfere again. "By indirections find directions out," Polonius will urge (II. i. 66). Here is the stage direction at the opening of IV. iv., the second solo of the clown with his dog named Crab: "Outside the Duke's palace. Enter Launce, with his dog." Now picture yourself at a performance of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as Launce enters with Crab, a frisky, self-willed but attractive dog on leash. The dog's misbehavior is quite engaging to you as a member of the audience. You can't help laughing as you watch Crab.

Launce. When a man's servant shall play the cur with him, look you, it goes hard: one that I brought up of a puppy; one that I sav'd from drowning, when three of four of his blind brothers and sisters went to it. I have taught him, even as one would say precisely, "Thus I would teach a dog." I was sent to deliver him as a present to Mistress Silvia from my master; and I came no sooner into the dining-chamber but he steps me to her trencher and steals her capon's leg. O, 'tis a foul thing when a cur cannot keep himself in all companies! I would have (as one should say) one that takes upon him to be a dog indeed, to be, as it were, a dog at all things. If I had not had more wit than he, to take a fault upon me that he did, I think verily he had been hang'd for't; sure as I live he had suffer'd for't. You shall judge: he thrusts me himself into the company of three or four gentlemen-like dogs under the Duke's table. He had not been there (bless the mark!) a pissing-while, but all the chamber smelt him. "Out with the dog," says one. "What cur is that?" says another. "Whip him out," says the third. "Hang him up," says the Duke. I, having been acquainted with the smell before, knew it was Crab, and goes me to the fellow that whips the dogs: "Friend," quoth I, "you mean to whip the dog?" "Ay, marry, do I," quoth he. "You do him the more wrong," quoth I, "'twas I did the thing you wot of." He makes me no more ado, but whips me out of the chamber. How many masters would do this for his servant? Nay, I'll be sworn, I have sat in the stocks for puddings he hath stol'n, otherwise he had been executed; I have stood on the pillory for geese he hath kill'd, otherwise he had suffer'd for't. Thou think'st not of this now. Nay, I remember the trick

The Upstart Crow

you serv'd me, when I took my leave of Madame Silvia.
 Did not I bid thee still mark me, and do as I do? When
 didst thou see me heave up my leg and make water
 against a gentlewoman's farthingale? Didst thou ever
 see me do such a trick? [*Exit imaginary actor and dog.*]⁵

In your imagination, which player had the better lines? In the theatre of your mind, where did you focus your attention? Who was leading whom? And who got what's crucial—the applause? Care to share the stage with man's best friend when you have a long speech to deliver but best friend does not? The worst poison for the ego of an employed actor is to be upstaged but remain unable to return the favor. Launce's solo is pungent and funny. Yet who was listening? Not your figurative audience. Not the dog. I've used this paper as a talk three times, with a live actor and live dog (brought in as a surprise to the audience). The dog was the winner each time; my actor was simply disregarded—a fate intended by the author, I suggest, for even so resourceful and magnetic a comedian as Kemp. Notice the final line of the speech: "Didst thou ever see me do such a trick?" Do such a *trick*? That word sounds a hint of the poet's intended mischief. I sense that a banana peel has been tossed in—a serious Shakespearean prank. One can imagine Stratford Will auditioning the pooch of the premiere, seeking extra friskiness and canine charm, even if there is truth to the notion that this country boy didn't like dogs. Kemp could not have complained openly; the role certainly had been blown up for him. Yet it must have been an afternoon he would not soon forget. Burbage ought to have been pleased, for the young author had accommodated the seasoned performer, more or less. Spectators surely relished the dog caper. Shakespeare must have savored it, for this distinctive invention—an appendage snugly compatible with the text, yet serving as inescapable quicksand—conveyed his defiance to Kemp. Should the clown miss the point, however, the playwright buried warnings in the dialogue of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, all on the same word. Proteus to Launce: "Villain, forbear," and two lines later, "Sirrah, I say, forbear!" (III. i. 202, 204). At the end of the play Valentine reiterates this charge, a final notice to the off-stage Launce: "Forbear, forbear, I say!" (V. iv. 122). Thanks to a literary banana peel, the clown tradition in this repertory company will come under control.

Now begins the final fantasy in this chain of artistic development. Due to the plague, London playhouses starting January 1593 were restricted for more than a year. Performing only sporadically, Kemp would have the idle time in which to reflect upon his status, to brood over his setbacks. He had suffered further discontent

since the doggy ridicule.⁶ His two publicly presented Shakespeare roles had disgruntled him. *Richard II's* royal gardener was confined to one scene, to orderly blank verse, and lacked any jokes; not Kemp's cup of tea. After that came *Romeo and Juliet*, its leading clown role too inconsequential for a player of Will Kemp's rank. Moreover, Burbage was no help, for although the poet in 1594 was not yet "King o' th' Playwrights," his star was ever rising. Kemp was aware of Shakespeare's talent for filling the house and therefore being encouraged by Burbage to write as he pleased. Then as now, a top-drawer playwright was esteemed a rarity, while exceptional repertory men were valued as merely exceptional. Frustrated by Shakespeare's authority to deflate the clown parts, Kemp would ponder what the best maneuver might be. He could come around to this: "My complaints, my hostility, have gained nothing, and if I do not yield, it may get worse. It might be wise for me to go along with this winner, to avoid still more reduction and shame." *Yield? Shame?* These words would recall for Kemp a line which standing in the wings as Costard he had heard Navarre deliver: "How well this yielding rescues thee from shame!" (*LLL*, I. i. 118). (Why, look you, another whisper from writer to actor.) "Well then, I . . . must . . . and . . . right on!" he concludes. So—provided you have bought into my argument—you can envision Kemp swallowing his pride, deciding to make up to the playwright. At first he converts his frowns into a show of friendliness. Then he offers a gift, to be followed by the hospitality of a cheerful dinner, perhaps with charming ladies present. Maybe more than once. Surface cordiality between the two professionals is kindled.

Thus, I am able to imagine Kemp approaching Shakespeare, say, in January 1595, and entreating him to compose a work featuring good parts for five clowns, with a juicy role for a certain leading clown. "Something newfangled, Master Will, just to put our company, so please you, into a comedy triumph. We clowns promise to keep to our parts just as scripted and as directed by you, sir." The ego is no less active, merely redirected. (Mark Twain: "There are no grades of vanity, there are only grades of ability in concealing it.") I picture the playwright welcoming this petition, picking up his cue amicably. Then, in his quarters, content to tackle it, he conjures up a scenario. "Let me see," he muses, "let me see. . . . I'll draw up a new style of comedy, the clown lead matched to Kemp's personality. The role shall amply display his bubbling egoism and salty energy. Hmmm, what shall he do? Why, of course: He'll be the overblown leading player in a hopelessly inept troupe of amateur actors. Nevertheless, I'll

create for Kemp one soliloquy which for a moment could lift him to the stars . . . as in a dream.

"Well," Shakespeare continues, "I daresay this clown bunch, handed an impossible farce, must face an on-stage audience, so why not bring in nobility, 'upstairs/downstairs,' as worked in *Love's Labor's Lost*? As for lovers, I recall my four cross-threaded ducklings in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. I'll use that routine again, only with more confusion, a regular rumpus. What next? If I set the scenes as mainly pastoral, why then fairies could fit in, a whole band of 'em, and let their doings in a moonlit woodland cause a magical mix-up of the lovers. Maybe the fairies can be linked with those—what shall I call that crew of patches—ah, rude mechanicals. But O Kemp, thou art such a conceited ass! Come to think of it, can I find a twist in the plot thereby to fix onto thy swelled head an ass's nole? Yes, and the nole shall fit both the story and thy cheekiness, all to good advantage. Even so, the play will not be well fitted till I find the right name for Kemp's egocentric role. Because he might become the top o' th' play, perhaps he should be called . . . Bottom. And to keep him in line, I'll include in the playlet another dog; this time a stuffed toy dog, held by one of those rude mechanicals. That will remind this head clown of how I nicked him three years ago with a live Dog . . . Hah! O Kemp, thou art to be chang'd! Well now, what title shall I coin for this comedy? Brrr, it's cold here in London, even for a January night. Oh, how we country folk do look forward to our balmy . . . dreamy . . . midsummer nights 'Zounds!'"

A Midsummer Night's Dream, with Kemp as Nick Bottom, was a total success. Strangely, before the decade ended, it fell into neglect for nearly three centuries. In our century it has become one of the most admired, most produced, of all the comedies. Rightly so. Not only a delightful fiction, it is also a profound treatment of the power of love, whether creative or destructive or laughable or merely wonderful, love ever capable of changing our lives. Yet this work bears a significance above its rank as delicious entertainment. It represents a shift in Shakespeare's comic genius at work—as Ariel will sing it, ". . . a sea-change into something rich and strange" (*TMP*, I. ii. 400). Despite some older structural elements, the result is a synthesis artistically unprecedented. For the first time (as Andrew pointed out elsewhere) his clowns, both individually and as a group, are under a full control that prevents their interfering with the narrative. Yet there is no undue inhibition of their sight gags, and they do contribute to the forward movement of the play. I find the weaving in and out of the four divergent groups to be an

inspired plot design, revealing a dazzling technique of conjunction, interaction, separation, and lingering impression . . . as in a dream. Different categories are integrated seamlessly: straight dramatic tension, romance, pathos, comedy, farce, and masque. Reason versus imagination is explored in a sly peek at the poet's art. Above all, prose communication begins its ripening in this play. Bottom's realistic prose usage leads to Shylock's command of non-verse dialogue, out of which will flow Falstaff's extraordinary exploitation of words. Later speakers of vibrant prose passages in Shakespeare are all indebted to Bottom's naturalness. With these new or enhanced elements, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is daringly different in formula, expressiveness, and in audience fulfillment. In my view, this fairy-tale for grown-ups singularly heightened the playwright's ingenuity, poetic style, and dramatic voltage. Seen from the perspective of his mighty middle works, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is like a seedling out of which the Shakespearean flower blossomed.

The question then is: How much credit for this revolutionary product should we ascribe to Kemp's over-weening ego? Possibly it would have been written without any special relationship in place, simply because Kemp's outstanding skills were at hand. I guess otherwise. My murky insight tells me that lacking Kemp's surge toward conciliation, Shakespeare would not have dreamed up such a rewarding role for a clown. Rather, a certain talent, angling for conciliation and in effect surrendering—prompted the invention of a vehicle designed to capitalize on that talent. Although its presentation and topicalities may have been pertinent to affairs at court, the scenario was penned for a repertory application; it was custom-fitted to a self-appointed star performer. Conceited artistry volunteered itself; no matter now the conceitedness, its surrender educed the emphasis on the clown lead. (As often as not, Bottom takes the last bow on stage. He is rightly the focal point of this synoptic dream.) The skills themselves evoked what Kemp broached at the first parley: something newfangled. Thus Kemp, albeit not a co-author, may deserve credit as a lesser co-inspirator. Keep in mind that Shakespeare's aim was to curb clown custom. The plays beginning with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* point in that direction. Therefore, if no Kemp a'begging, no Bottom, no *Dream*.

If the course of artistic transformation did start with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by way of the doggy business leading to that work, then Kemp's ego plays a central role here. In the effect on Shakespeare's progress, Kemp and his ego come close to Anne Hathaway and her receptivity. The collision with this

clown is the second vital event among the external factors in the career story. Of course, it took a strong inner mainspring—plus unaccountable poetic power—to produce the fascinating early works; that's plainly true. It also may be true that it took a discord to jar into motion a more complex creative mechanism, to trigger the response which brought us the astonishing masterworks of the middle period. The irritation of a grain of sand is necessary to provoke the oyster's defense. The pearl growing out of the poet's remedy against adversity was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It adorns the ending of the most useful of confrontations. "Sweet are the uses of adversity," says the Duke in *As You Like It*. Here the truly operative word for me is not *adversity*, but *uses* (II. i. 12). *To use*. Shakespeare's good luck is fully earned, and he has used it, he has capitalized on it. His miracle career is poised for its full flowering.

Well, have I convinced you? I have nearly convinced myself. Although the evidence is slippery, even shadowy, there may be something in this. Maybe. It might have happened. Maybe. What else are we to gather from his unique use in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* of a live dog? It seems unthinkable that stage veterans Burbage or Kemp would have asked for it as an experiment. Canine competition would not appeal to experienced theatre folk. But as role-inflation bargained for, that's a different complication. Kemp was stuck with it. Knowing how Shakespeare loved to repeat successful situations by weaving them into fresh patterns, how come no live dog again? His best-loved comedy, *Twelfth Night*, seems but one winning recapitulation of every success he could steal from himself. Yet we find no echo of the dog nonsense there, or elsewhere. That it was done only once implies that it was a calculated trick, thrown in for a non-artistic purpose: to subdue Kemp. Recall the final line of Launce's speech: "Didst thou ever see me do such a trick?" Publicly addressed to Crab, it is plausibly a private message for Kemp's apperception. We are beholden to the first dog cast as Crab, and even more so to the cue from Kemp which brought us Bottom and his dream.

If my imaginings are found admissible, then the most glorious, the most potent career in letters is very much indebted to an ill-assorted marriage, to a player's inflated ego, and to one lucky banana peel. Coupling; conceitedness; conciliation. Instruments of fate to help create *the* career.

My ending is prompted by lines from *Macbeth*, as he addresses the imaginary dagger: "Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going; and such an instrument I was to use" (II. i. 42-43).

We must be no less grateful to the clown than we are to Mistress Hathaway, and thus should exclaim: We thank thee, Master Kemp, for thou, too, didst marshall him the way that he was going, and such an instrument—thy actor's ego—he was to use.

Midland, Texas

Notes

¹Comparison of the clown structure in the early comedies with that of the main three after *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reveals a systematic reduction of the prominence of clowning and slapstick, along with the imposition of control over clown immoderacy. The earlier Shakespeare clown gets more time on stage, presents non-dramatic interludes, and may indulge in chatter with his audience or in other unscripted self-promotion, verbal or nonverbal. His counterpart is denied these privileges by the time of the top trilogy. Such fashion indicates the clown's commercial significance to the acting company. Clowns were the darlings of the paying public. (Kemp and the other leading clown, Thomas Pope, each held a ten percent share, as did Shakespeare, in the 1594 company and later in the Globe. Kemp's successor, the gifted and sensitive Robert Armin—probably chosen for the job by the poet himself—had no such holdings; another indication, perhaps, of the declining importance of the clown, around 1600, in the Shakespeare orbit.) Moreover, the early clown's place in the narrative, his dramatic impact, is usually negligible. That clown, however, had continual openings for disruptive improvisation. This inherited formula, unavoidable at the start of Shakespeare's career, must have pained the poet's dramatic sensibilities and his concept of narrative continuity. That the disconnected, extra-dramatic position of the clown(s) permitted extemporal horseplay galled him. Hamlet's oft-quoted injunction to the players (III. ii. 32) proclaims his feeling: "And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them. For there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it."

Translation: Beware of self-promoting clowns such as the ambitious Master Kemp. Translation of the translation: He's gone but not forgotten.

The clowning in the later comedies has evolved into alternating scenes or appearances made subject to the needs of the drama. As Leslie Hotson puts it in *Shakespeare's Motley* (New York: Haskell House, 1971 [first pub. 1952]), pp. 86-87, "It was a time for a new departure. In the 1590's the clown had flourished and luxuriated to the point of proving noxious to the drama . . . the clown in the midst of all may mar all." Now the moments for upstaging the author, in the style of an uncontrolled stand-up comedian in a cabaret, are no longer in the scripts. Control of the clown is effective, mainly because his part is closely interwoven with the central action of the play.

A Midsummer Night's Dream boasts six clowns, as was the early general rule. In *Much Ado about Nothing* I count five, and four in both *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. Is Fabian's elusive character written for a clown? Not to my ear. Maria could be a clown-apprentice boy. If a regular boy actor (more likely), then the clown troupe in *Twelfth Night* comes down to three. And with no room to ad-lib.

What a comedown in less than a decade! *Much Ado about Nothing* is dated 1598; even then the textual fix was in. Hotson, p. 87, picks up on this: "As for Kemp [Dogberry] and Crowley [Verges], however free this inimitable pair may have felt to improve the ordinary play with gags and 'business,' the roles lovingly fitted to them in *Much Ado about Nothing* could hardly have tempted them to speak more than was set down." This first of the Big Three has nearly the old number of clowns, but the new control is operative. Even if my nose count is in error, control of the clown and clowning remains established by the manifest design and the working-out of each play. With these three comedies—and within the fabric of the drama—Shakespeare has constricted his clowns.

This control and diminution of the clown action would be enough to trigger the presumed "trade union problem." *Variety* would tag it "an internal tussle over turf and take." (Kemp's absence in 1596-97 could reflect a renewal of the squabble. In 1599 he liquidated his holdings, clearing out entirely, and the next year he performed his spectacular morris dance from London to Norwich, some 114 miles. He celebrated the fame of this ambitious and athletic stunt by authoring "Kemps nine daies wonder," which book drew yet more adulation. Excess energy or excess ego?) Protests and possible hostility on the part of Kemp and his troupe-within-a-troupe in the 1590's would be as natural as breathing, and would be even more expected nowadays. Such damage to professional position and personal glory, such an affront to the dignity of labor and to fair labor practices, would, four centuries later, probably provoke a call to shoot the playwright and burn down the theatre.

²Ivor Brown, *Shakespeare* (New York: Time, Inc., 1949), pp. 91-92. See also S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare* (New York: New American Library, 1986), pp. 116-117.

³See Chronological Table, *The Living Shakespeare*, ed. Oscar James Campbell (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 72.

⁴*Set down* as in Iago's musical metaphor, my paraphrase of which hopes to convey Will's presumed intent: "O, you're well puff'd up now! / But I'll set down the ego that swells this rudesby, / As tricky as I am" (*OTH*, II. i. 196-98).

⁵IV. iv. 1-39, from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974). Other quotations, however, follow *The London Shakespeare*, ed. John Munro (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958).

⁶See Chronology and Sources, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 51, for proposed order of R2 and ROM as being prior to MND, and the proposed date of 1595 for MND.

“Three”-floating Sexuality: Viola’s Identity in Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* by Michaela Röll

The main characters of *Twelfth Night*—Orsino, Olivia, and Cesario—connect through a triangular relationship of unrequited love which, though modified in the end, tests the comedic norms. Especially novel is the character of Cesario, who initiates and maintains the triangle and whose central role in it is already established through the structure of the play. Cesario appears on stage together with Orsino or with Olivia, but until the end of the play the three are never united on stage, nor do Orsino and Olivia meet in Cesario’s absence. S/he seems to reject resolution of this *ménage à trois*. When it finally splits into two pairings, s/he is silent. Critics disagree strongly about Cesario’s function in the play. While some point out the character’s inability to master the complicated situation or “her insistence upon enduring events rather than creating them,”¹ others have drawn attention to “Viola’s plot”² and have called Viola/Cesario an “excellent schemer.”³ Among diverse disagreement about Cesario’s gender, Jean E. Howard argues that Cesario/Viola’s subjectivity is “properly feminine,”⁴ whereas Douglas E. Green, although coming to a similar conclusion (i.e., that the play denies the articulation of a self-confident feminine consciousness), posits that in the end Cesario is no woman at all, but rather is “absorbed into the masculine.”⁵ Robert Kimbrough sees in Viola an androgyne, encompassing human integration⁶ whereas Keir Elam finds in Viola/Cesario the eunuch as an impersonation of castrated sexuality, whether male or female.⁷

I will focus on Cesario’s role in the formation and maintainance of the erotic triangle, which entails my acceptance of Cesario as an active character. I propose that Cesario constitutes her/his identity out of the interstices between the genders and their connected social roles. Cesario thus tries to attain a fluid existence within the triangle of unrequited love. This existence, however, relies on no prior androgynous integrity, but rather a constant effort to bridge the gap between opposite poles.⁸ Therefore, I refer to her/him as Cesario, the name chosen for cross-gender identity. Since Cesario has no specific gender and constitutes her/his situation out of the gaps between categories, I have refrained from choosing either the male or female pronoun. The double pronoun is very useful, since it expresses the

tension out of which the character acts throughout the play. Furthermore, it avoids confusion because I reserve the choice of either male or female pronoun exclusively for reference to that respective constituent of Cesario's person.

Through her/his new role Cesario fashions a subjectivity which is situated between the genders and established through a simultaneity of homoeroticism and heterosexuality found in the triangle of unrequited love. The disruption of traditional roles permits Cesario to exist in a free condition, outside of fixed categories. To analyze the breaking of categories, I want initially to define these categories, using the terminology of Valerie Traub:

"[S]ex" will refer exclusively to those anatomical, biological distinctions by which cultures differentiate between males and females; it will not be used in the sense of "to have sex" or "to make love," nor will it be used synonymously with "gender." "Gender" denotes the culturally prescribed roles and behaviors available to the two "sexes"; its ideologically freighted outcome is a "masculinity" and "femininity" correlated with "males" and "females," but its instability is underscored by the cross-gendered presence, for instance, of "effeminate" men and "butch" women. "Sexuality" refers to erotic desires and practices, including but not limited to the direction and scope of erotic preferences (i.e. object choice).⁹

I will not go into detail about Cesario's sex, because it is impossible to see Cesario with the surgeon's eye. The rest is subject to outward appearance.¹⁰ Mainly the categories of sexuality and gender are ambiguous. This process is accomplished in the triangular relation of unrequited love. Liberation from the dichotomy of male and female, brother and sister, hetero- and homoerotic is found in the triangle, which is unfixed through incongruities and unrequitedness. These incongruities and gaps are also manifest throughout the textuality of the play, and prevent the audience or reader from categorizing Cesario. This fluid existence, however, is constantly threatened by Illyrian society and by Cesario's own momentary internalization of patriarchal values. Cesario's situation can be understood only from the interplay of contradictory elements, which are equally present. To inquire into Cesario's position in this context, I will follow its development in chronological order, and will examine different stages from Viola's shipwreck to the proposed marriage at the end.

I. Viola's Arrival—Birth of a Eunuch

After her shipwreck Viola is rescued by a sailor in Act One, scene two, and taken to the shores of Illyria. This incident is presented as a turning point in which her previous life and identity are left behind. A new life lies ahead. Viola's family relations and social status belong to the past, for Viola's twin brother, Sebastian, is lost in the waves. Like every Renaissance woman, her role was hitherto defined by the family, especially its male members. Her identity was doubtless closely related to that of her twin brother, who has thus helped to shape Viola through his person. Because Sebastian was the brother, male, masculine, she was his sister, female, feminine.¹¹ Now that Viola is free of any masculine defining counterpart, her identity has to be reshaped in a new context. This holds true for her gender situation as well as for her social status. As Lisa Jardine argues, in the early modern period fatherless youths of good family, whether male or female, were "obliged to become dependent on households other than those of their own close kin."¹² Viola is therefore about to enter service, which implies economic dependency as well as sexual availability.¹³ Viola enters a dialectic situation. She is freed of old restraints but destined to become dependent.

Viola inquires for the duke of Illyria and is told of Orsino. She recalls, "Orsino! I have heard my father name him. / He was a bachelor then" (I. ii. 28-29).¹⁴ When she learns that Orsino is in love with Olivia, Viola is immediately interested in her. Being told that Olivia has abjured the company and sight of men, Viola exclaims,

O that I serv'd that lady,
And might not be delivered to the world
Till I had made mine own occasion mellow
What my estate is!

(I. ii. 41-44)

Through her conduct Viola already confronts the first paradox. The fact that Orsino is still available on the marital market seems to have eminent importance for her. It is the first thing she remembers about Orsino, and she pursues this information further. Even a slight touch of jealousy might be noted in Viola's laconic question concerning Orsino's beloved: "What's she?" (35). Her interest in the bachelor seems to mismatch, however, her instinctive decision to live in exclusively female company and to "serve" Olivia. This first allusion to homoerotic desire is only implied, nonetheless, and is by no means any more explicitly determined than her first interest in the bachelor. The seeming

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contradiction creates a tension, a gap in the texture of the character. Viola is told that it is impossible to serve Olivia and decides to serve the duke in the disguise of a eunuch. Viola is about to become dependent, but will play a role. In his influential book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt depicts role-playing as a dominant form of self-fashioning during the Renaissance.¹⁵ Through the adopted role Viola's new dependence will be self-fashioned. The ambiguities in connection with her role form an essential part of Viola's new self, called Cesario.

Deprived of sex, the eunuch has the voice of a woman and the body of a man, which is fixed in an undeveloped, sterile stage. As the visible form of her intent, Viola's disguise thus fills the gap between the sexual preferences, connects the contradictions through a neutral existence, and allows for undecideability: "What else may hap, to time I will commit" (60). Her intent is itself still a blank, as is the span of time until Viola's occasion mellows. Gaps in the text and in Cesario's character make possible the communication between the audience and the play through a tension created by discrepancies.¹⁶ The audience can push Viola into neither a hetero- nor homoerotic space. Nor is eroticism at all explicit. The possibility of those implications, however, is established and will be at the reader's or spectator's disposal, contextualizing further expectations and reactions to the development of the plot. Through Viola's interest in Orsino and Olivia, the *ménage à trois* is cautiously prepared, and through her disguise the play will pursue the question of Viola's search for a new identity.

II. Counselor, Wooer, and Servant

After three days at Orsino's court, Cesario has given up the neutrality which had at first replaced Viola's feminine gender.¹⁷ The term *eunuch* does not appear again in connection with Cesario. Sterility gives way to multiple sexual implications, desires, and responsibilities. Eroticism becomes a main force in the development of the characters' relationships. Cesario has become the intimate counselor of Duke Orsino and knows "no less but all" (I. iv. 13) of Orsino's secret soul. Orsino has absolute confidence in Cesario. Orsino and Cesario form a masculine in-group identity, which allows Orsino to identify with Cesario. Cesario is charged with the task of expressing Orsino's woes as Orsino's representative in the active courtship. This courtship is at the same time the masculine part in society's love game.¹⁸ On the other hand, Cesario

is successful as a man because s/he is so feminine:

It shall become thee well to act my woes:
She will attend it better in thy youth
Than in a nuntio's of more grave aspect.

Viola. I think not so, my lord.

Duke. Dear lad, believe it;
For they shall yet belie thy happy years,
That say thou art a man. Diana's lip
Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
And all is semblative a woman's part.
I know thy constellation is right apt
For this affair.

(I. iv. 26-36)

Cesario encompasses a simultaneity of seemingly contradictory attributes. S/he is the perfect masculine wooer, perfect because of her/his "Diana's lips." This is the free-floating situation of her/his sexual and gender role. Because Viola has lost Sebastian, Cesario can now be both woman and man.

While Cesario is "right apt" for replacing Orsino in front of Olivia, s/he is at the same time subject to Orsino's erotic desire. Orsino idealizes Cesario's androgyny in poetic lines similar to those of the speaker of Sonnet 20, who addresses the "master mistress of [his] passion."¹⁹ Orsino furthermore alludes to Cesario's status as a servant and promises ample gratification for her/his service: "Prosper well in this, / And thou shalt live as freely as thy lord, / To call his fortunes thine" (38-40). Compared to Antonio's overtly homoerotic desire for Sebastian, which is "[m]ore sharp than filed steel" (III. iii. 5) and thus unmistakably penetrating and single, the desire which Cesario evokes in Orsino is implied and multifarious; it encompasses masculine confidence based on a shared identity as well as sensual attraction towards the feminine boy.

Cesario's desire at this point seems slightly more easy to pin down: s/he desires to be Orsino's wife and has to woo her/his rival Olivia. S/he thus has to enact Orsino's role while s/he feels the desire to be in Olivia's place: "Who'er I woo, myself would be his wife" (I. iv. 42). It becomes clear that the neutral gap created by the tensions of the eunuch has itself recreated tensions and given way to heterogeneous and contradictory erotic desires. It is daunting to label these desires which change kaleidoscopically in accordance with the empathetic perspective of the audience. Cesario has ruptured gender categories as well as sexual response towards her/his person.

Before discussing the first meeting between Cesario and Olivia, I would like to reconsider the information about Olivia to which Cesario has access and which is likely to influence Cesario's expectations. During her arrival in Illyria in Act One, scene two, Viola is told that Olivia has lost her father and, very recently, her brother, whom she still mourns. This information parallels Viola's own recent experience: Viola's father died on her thirteenth birthday, and since the shipwreck she has believed Sebastian dead. The similarities between the two are further enhanced by the related names of Olivia and Viola. Note how this common ground mirrors that which Cesario shares with Orsino. The women's side is constituted by the loss of the male counterpart in charge of the woman, and the men's side encompasses those same charges of masculine gender, i.e., to take responsibility for a woman, to woo her, and remind her of her marital duties.

Cesario, as I have suggested, has begun to form a new identity, which presents itself as a synthesis of Viola and Sebastian. Olivia comes to mirror the part within Cesario which is connected to Viola's past. It may thus be said that when Cesario encounters Olivia, s/he is prejudiced, partly because of their socially induced subordination to their brothers as well as by feminine rivalry, and partly because of a new awareness of masculine responsibilities in a patriarchal society.

When Cesario meets Olivia, s/he woos as the representative of Orsino and of the masculine gender. This wooing encompasses an exertion of power over Olivia and confronts her with patriarchal repression:

Viola. Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty—I pray you tell me if this be the lady of the house, for I never saw her. I would be loath to cast away my speech; for besides that it is excellently well penn'd, I have taken great pains to con it.

.....
Olivia. Whence came you, sir?

Viola. I can say little more than I have studied, and that question's out of my part.

(I. v. 169-79)

This mode of wooing is paradigmatic for Petrarchan epideictic praise and its fundamental asymmetry between the addressor and addressee. Whereas it is completely acceptable for Cesario to have replaced Orsino as a wooer, s/he demands Olivia's personal presence. Apparently, it does not occur to her/him that Olivia could reject the speech because Cesario has "taken great pains to

con it," i.e., because the wooer is only a holder of place. Olivia receives no answer to her question regarding Cesario's person. On the other hand, Cesario already hints at the limits of Orsino's text, which cannot provide answers to all of Olivia's queries.

Like the Petrarchan wooer, Cesario idealizes Olivia while reminding her of her procreative duties:

Viola. 'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white
Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on.
Lady, you are the cruell'st she alive
If you will lead these graces to the grave,
And leave the world no copy.

(239-43)

It is exactly this idolatry, however, which reduces Olivia to a passive, silent, and disembodied object.²⁰ Olivia for her part realizes this disembodiment and reverses it wittily, reducing herself to "*item, two lips . . . ; item, two grey eyes . . . ; item, one neck, one chin, and so forth*" (247-49). By thus forcing Olivia's disembodiment and hiding her/himself behind the person of Orsino, Cesario represses Olivia's individuality, substituting the detached constructions of idealized love and idealized woman. These ideals are based on male appetite and enhanced through masculine control and power assertion. Love is delineated as a female duty, aimed at reproduction.²¹

Continuance of this power can be found in Cesario's attempt to force Olivia into loving Orsino. S/he insists that "you should pity me" were s/he in Orsino's place (276). When this logic fails, power manifests itself more openly in a threat:

My master, not myself, lacks recompense.
Love make his heart of flint that you shall love,
And let your fervor like my master's be
Plac'd in contempt! Farewell, fair cruelty.

(285-88)

Meanwhile, Cesario knows well that pity cannot create love. When Olivia reveals her love for Cesario in their next encounter, Cesario turns the logic upside down:

Viola. I pity you.
Olivia. That's a degree to love.
Viola. No, not a grize; for 'tis a vulgar proof
That very oft we pity enemies.

(III. i. 123-25)

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It becomes clear that Cesario plays the part of patriarchal wooer all too well. But Cesario is not fixed in this role of Orsino's mouthpiece. Cesario becomes an independent performer of wooing. Behind the hypothetical expression, "If I did love you in my master's flame" (I. v. 264), hides a Cesario who has just pleaded, "Good madam, let me see your face" (230), and thus incited Olivia to the symbolic act of unveiling herself. Cesario has definitely exceeded her/his text with this request and is amazed by Olivia's beauty: "But if you were the devil, you are fair" (251). After having described Orsino's "fertile tears" (255) and thus having articulated Orsino's stereotypical "feminine" softness, passivity and suffering,²² Cesario crowns her/his personal wooing with the declaration of her/his state: "I am a gentleman" (279). This achieves an immediate effect on Olivia: "I'll be sworn thou art; / Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, actions, and spirit / Do give thee fivefold blazon" (291-93). As Cristina Malcolmson points out, Olivia "has in fact fallen for a cleverly created illusion, Viola's capable representation of the attributes of an upper-class young man, with his tongue, face, limbs, actions and spirit."²³ This, however, is just part of Cesario's newly fashioned identity, for Cesario gestures repeatedly towards the feminine constituent of her/his ambiguous existence: "I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth, / And that no woman has, nor never none / Shall mistress be of it, save I alone" (III. i. 158-60). The tension between those different roles (counselor, wooer, and servant) increases and takes the form of a triangle of multiple desires.

III. *Fais le ménage!* Orsino—Cesario—Olivia

How does this triangle shape itself in the course of increasing sexual tensions? As the various desires present themselves, each of the three characters is connected to the two others in a relation of mutual erotic attraction. Orsino is simultaneously in love with Olivia and attracted by the youthful femininity of Cesario while hetero- and homoerotic desires overlap in his response towards Cesario's enigmatic existence between the two sexes. As for Cesario, s/he is in love with Orsino but admires Olivia's beauty, independently exceeding Orsino's text. Alternating between hiding behind Orsino and advancing in her/his own fervor, Cesario establishes an erotic play of granting and withholding favor. This play leaves Olivia wholly in love with Cesario at the end of Act One, scene five. The asymmetry of the equilibrated triangle is due to Olivia's disapproval of Orsino's affection. This is exactly what Cesario tries to overcome in her/his various

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encounters with Olivia: whether rudely or gently, s/he always reminds Olivia of the need to accept Orsino's wooing.

When Cesario meets Orsino again, s/he also plays a double game. Orsino is encouraged in his continuing pursuit of Olivia:

Duke. For such as I am, all true lovers are,
Unstaid and skittish in all motions else,
Save in the constant image of the creature
That is belov'd. How dost thou like this tune?

Viola. It gives a very echo to the seat
Where Love is thron'd.

(II. iv. 17-22)

Instead of counseling the duke to abandon the thought of winning Olivia for his love, Cesario reassures the duke of his constancy. In fact, Orsino's behavior becomes a paradigm for love itself. Later, however, Cesario abandons this tactic for a while and introduces some doubts concerning the success of Orsino's wooing. These doubts instantly lead Cesario to the affirmation of her/his own desire and mark her/his wish to replace Olivia in Orsino's favor:

Viola. But if she cannot love you, sir?

Duke. [I] cannot be so answer'd.

Viola. Sooth, but you must.

Say that some lady, as perhaps there is,
Hath for your love as great a pang of heart
As you have for Olivia.

(87-91)

The danger of Orsino's preference for Olivia over Cesario seems to lead Cesario to draw attention to her/his own person. At the same time, Cesario tries secretly to confess her/his love to Orsino. To admit this love, however, Cesario has to split her/his person into two, which entails unmasking her/his diversity and choosing one category of existence. This would lead her/him to either a hetero- or homosexual relationship, depending on her/his gender decision. If Cesario does not want to give away her/his complex identity, s/he must split her/his unifying presence between the two poles and create two separate existences: brother and sister. "My father had a daughter lov'd a man / As it might be perhaps, were I a woman, / I should your lordship" (107-09). Cesario's new synthesis of Sebastian and Viola is thus temporarily dissolved. The family bounds are reestablished. Sebastian, the dead brother, is internalized in Cesario's masculine role, and accordingly pulled into presence, whereas the living sister, Viola, is externalized and alienated into near non-existence. This

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process of alienation ultimately leads to Orsino's question: "But died thy sister of her love, my boy?" (119). Still, the dead and living are equally present within Cesario; an equilibrium between presence and absence guarantees Cesario's uncanny existence in such a manner that neither Viola nor Sebastian is entirely separated from the rest of Cesario's identity.²⁴ Cesario consequently manages to pull the poles together again: "I am all the daughters of my father's house, / And all the brothers too—and yet I know not" (120-21).

What happens in this moment of dissolution is that Cesario tries to establish a *ménage à trois* between the two poles of her/his identity and Orsino. To avoid surrender to either masculine or feminine gender, i.e., to either homoeroticism or heterosexuality, Cesario needs the triangle. S/he has therefore blurred the boundaries between the brother's love for Orsino and the sister's love for "a man" through her/his hypothetical construction: "as it might be perhaps, were I a woman." The gap between the two opposite existences increases and finds embodiment in "A blank, my lord; she never told her love, / But let concealment like a worm i'th' bud / Feed on her damask cheek" (110-12). As the opposite poles drift apart, Cesario has to make acrobatic efforts to bridge the gap and unify both sides again in her/his person. The *ménage à trois* without Cesario's rival Olivia is not convenient for Cesario's purposes, if s/he wants to preserve her/his free-floating identity. S/he seems to realize this fact when s/he abruptly changes the subject from her enigmatic identity to the courtship of Olivia: "Sir, shall I to this lady?" (122).

Back at Olivia's house, Cesario tries to solidify the triangle with Olivia's help. After their previous encounter Olivia had informed Cesario of her love for her/him through a ring which she sent after her/him. Not only had she unveiled herself before Cesario, but she had also presented her/him with the ring, the "O-thing" or "no-thing," a signifier of female sex in several of Shakespeare's earlier plays (e.g., *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Merchant of Venice*). The gift of the ring objectifies Olivia's surrender of her sex and sexuality. Olivia has thus transcended the game of language and given her desire substance by action. She is now anxiously expecting Cesario's response to her intimate gift. "Most excellent accomplish'd lady, the heavens rain odors on you!" (III. i. 84-85) sounds like an excellent start. But better is still to come. Cesario proceeds: "My matter hath no voice, lady, but to your own most pregnant and vouchsavored ear" (88-89). With "pregnant" s/he implies male acceptance of Olivia's gift and hints at fertility and reproduction

through consummation of the love act. Cesario even opens her/himself in response and reveals her/his name to Olivia: "Cesario is your servant's name, fair princess" (97). Cesario gives Olivia the power over her/himself to name her/him and call Cesario her "servant," thus implying sexual submission to Olivia and foreshadowing Sebastian's willingness to be "rul'd" by this lady (IV. i. 64).

"Your servant's servant is your servant, madam" (102), expresses the triangular relationship of sexual availability in its perfect symmetry. It is necessary to consider that Cesario knows what Olivia expresses later: "Under your hard construction must I sit" (115). This line together with the constellation insinuated by of "your servant's servant is your servant" construct a triangle similar to the paintings of M. C. Escher. In Escher's triangle of stairs every corner or landing is located below the next landing, which in turn only leads below the next. Every corner in the triangle is thus at the same time above and below the previous one. Escher's paradoxical construction could visually represent the present situation: Olivia is subject to Cesario's interpretation, and Cesario, for her/his part, is her servant's servant. At the same time Olivia has the power to reject Orsino, who has the power to reject Cesario, who has control over Olivia's feelings.

Still, this triangle of unrequitedness is not completely congruent with the above mentioned triangle which grants free-floating sexuality through mutual interest between the three characters. Olivia's rejection of Orsino is the weakest link in the erotic chain. To strengthen this link, Cesario again reminds Olivia of the duke: "You'll nothing, madam, to my lord by me?" (136). Meanwhile, the danger of the sides of the triangle drifting apart seems to be increasing.

IV. Strip Your Sword Stark Naked: Social Implications of Cesario's Disguise and the Society of the Subplot

Cesario is not hermetically protected, however, by the boundaries of private desires. Whereas Cesario can blur her/his identity to a certain degree in the personal relationships with Olivia and Orsino, s/he has chosen masculine attire, and is thus taken for a male person in public. This masculine clothing endows Cesario with the liberties of the masculine gender role. Having employed Cesario, Orsino has given her/him the basis for economic engagement. At the beginning of Cesario's employment Orsino informs Cesario of his contractual terms: "Prosper well in this, / And thou shalt live as freely as thy lord, / To call his fortunes thine" (I. iv. 38-40). All that the former Viola could

have expected was to give whatever wealth she might have inherited from her father to her future husband. Or, more accurately, Sebastian would have managed her inheritance until he gave it as a dowry to Viola's future husband. Now Cesario is promised material rewards for her/his service at Orsino's court. Orsino's proposal of joining fortunes with his servant, however, also possesses a non-materialistic, romantic aspect, especially in the context of Cesario's aside, "myself would be his wife" (42). The multiple understandings of Orsino's promise, which would have been available to the Renaissance audience, increase the tension inherent in Cesario's character, as they pivot between the woman's wish to join fortunes with Orsino as his wife and the man's economic and possibly sexual engagement with his master.

Also new for Cesario is the freedom of walking alone through the streets of Illyria and of traveling between Orsino's court and Olivia's house. The duke's court is the place where power resides, where public matters are organized. Olivia's house, on the contrary, is a secluded space, to which only a specific group of people has access. Significantly, public space is thus occupied by the male Orsino and private space by the female Olivia. Again, Cesario's position in each of those two realms shows the special status of her/his role. Cesario traverses freely between those public and private spaces. S/he is paralleled in this aspect by Feste, who takes the liberty of being present when and where he likes. Feste's quibbles in Act Three, scene one suggest animosity towards a rival for free indeterminacy:

Viola. I saw thee late at the Count Orsino's.

Clown. Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun, it shines every where. I would be sorry, sir, but the fool should be as oft with your master as with my mistress. I think I saw your wisdom there.

(37-41)

Just as Feste's traveling between Orsino's court and Olivia's domain parallels Cesario's, so too in Act Two, scene three, directly after Cesario has met both Orsino and Olivia for the first time, the *ménage à trois* is foreshadowed by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Feste. The Clown joins Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in Olivia's house:

Sir Andrew. Here comes the fool, i' faith.

Clown. How now, my hearts? Did you never see the picture of "we three"?

(II. iii. 15-17)

The following dialogue mockingly takes up the sexual ambiguity of the *ménage à trois* of the main plot:

Sir Andrew. By my troth, the fool has an excellent *breast*. I had rather than forty shillings I had such a *leg*, and so *sweet a breath to sing*, as the fool has. In sooth, thou wast in very *gracious* fooling last night, [. . .].

(19-21, my emphasis)

The allusions to body members and sexuality parodies the disembodying Petrarchan epideixis, discussed in connection with Cesario's wooing of Olivia. This mocking reversal of wooing and sexuality is the background for the song, "Three merry men be we" (76-77). Feste is the third member of the nocturnal society of revelers, paralleling Cesario in her/his special position between Orsino and Olivia.

These new liberties, however, are accompanied by new demands. Patriarchal society does not distinguish between sex and gender. When Sir Toby forces Cesario to fight, the male sex is inseparable from the sword: "strip your sword stark naked; for meddle you must, that's certain, or forswear to wear iron about you" (III. iv. 251-52). This association presents a danger for Cesario, who is initiated into masculine behavior without having had the chance to learn sword fighting. "A little thing would make me tell them how much I lack of a man" (302-03), exclaims Cesario; however, it is not the sword, which s/he lacks. It is the knowledge of how to handle it, i.e., masculine gender training. But such a training is not provided for persons without phalluses.²⁵ Societal injunctions determine fixed gender for the individual and thus categorize her/him. Cesario her/himself has internalized these injunctions, which threaten to split her/his personality back into Sebastian (who knows how to handle a sword) and Viola.

In fact, Sebastian has already appeared in the streets of Illyria several times, but Cesario has never seen him, except as part of her/himself: "He nam'd Sebastian. I my brother know / Yet living in my glass . . ." (379-80). When they finally meet, Sebastian has already used his sword against Sir Andrew and Sir Toby and married Olivia as Cesario's *doppelgänger*. Does Sebastian's masculine appearance split Cesario into an active and aggressive brother and a passive and compliant sister?

According to Jean E. Howard, "[t]he whole thrust of the dramatic narrative is to release this woman from the prison of her masculine attire and return her to her proper and natural position as wife" (431). Indeed, Cesario seems to dissolve into Viola, a

faithful wife to her future husband. When Orsino says: "Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times / Thou never shouldst love woman like to me" (V. i. 267-68), Cesario answers, "And all those sayings will I over swear" (269). Upon Orsino's declaration, "you shall from this time be / Your master's mistress" (325-26), Cesario remains silent. This silence is remarkable for a character who has demonstrated her/his wit throughout the play. Has Cesario become a silenced, passive woman? Whether s/he preferred to become Orsino's "master-mistress" the audience thus does not learn. For Catherine Belsey "the heroines become wives only after they have been shown to be something altogether more singular—because more plural."²⁶

On the other hand, as many critics have pointed out, Cesario's transformation into Viola seems to depend on Viola's attire:²⁷

If nothing lets to make us happy both
 But this my masculine usurp'd attire,
 Do not embrace me till each circumstance
 Of place, time, fortune, do cohere and jump
 That I am Viola—which to confirm,
 I'll bring you to a captain in this town,
 Where lie my maiden weeds.

(249-55)

And so does the marriage between Viola and Orsino: "Give me thy hand, / And let me see thee in thy woman's weeds" (272-73). Within the play, however, Cesario never exchanges men's clothes for women's. Douglas E. Green even argues that Cesario "never transforms himself [. . .] back to that theatrical illusion—the girl Viola" (335) and that the ending reveals a homosexual model of true love, akin to the relationship of Orsino/Cesario (boy actor) and Antonio/Sebastian.

Yet another model of explanation for this ending is that both Orsino and Olivia are betrothed to "a maid and man" (263). When Olivia exclaims, "A sister! You are she" (326), she articulates the prevailing confusion of genders and family relations which grants personal freedom for the androgynes. Robert Kimbrough takes this stance and even concludes that "Viola has shown us through her disguise that one can overcome gender differentiation regardless of sex" (32) and that Orsino and Olivia "are stimulated by her to draw on their androgynous potential for human growth and to develop toward full, whole, integrated selves" (32). Finally, if brother and sister have hitherto been mistaken for each other, who is to say that Viola does not pair with Olivia, and Sebastian with Orsino? In Peter Gill's performance of *Twelfth*

Night in 1974, Olivia and Orsino turn to the "wrong" twin momentarily, which intimates what possibilities of sexual fluidity are inherent in this ending.²⁸

What I propose is that *Twelfth Night's* ending does not resolve the tensions inherent in the play. While the fluid triangle, which propelled the action is modified and two couples leave the stage arm in arm, the tensions of Cesario's character are merely deferred to the minds of the spectators. This deferral, however, does not merely bring about the longing of an audience, "wanting to see the play again."²⁹ The paradigmatic Renaissance dialectic between freedom and restraint does not conclude with this play. It neither merely restitutes patriarchal hierarchy, reining in the women's aspirations, nor does it gesture towards a complete disruption of genders and the androgynous wholeness of its characters. While Cesario has been able to exist outside fixed categories through an erotic triangle of unrequited love, s/he has also encountered serious obstacles and has internalized some of them. Role-playing within the play has allowed Cesario to be man and woman, patriarchal wooer and androgynous servant—for a while. But Cesario is no early modern feminist, demonstrating women's integrity in the streets of Illyria. What those different readings show is that contradictory elements in Act Five resist alignment into a coherent pattern. The tensions between male and female, masculine and feminine, servant and master are deferred, bespeaking a highly dialectical Renaissance culture.

Universität Bonn

Notes

¹I would like to thank Dorothea Kehler for her encouragement and advice. Thanks also to *The Upstart Crow's* anonymous reader for the helpful suggestions. Anne Barton's Introduction to *Twelfth Night* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton, 1974), p. 406. See also Leo G. Salingar, "The Design of *Twelfth Night*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 9 (1958), 117-39 and Dimiter Daphinoff, "'None Can Be Called Deformed but the Unkind': Disruption of Norms in *Twelfth Night*," *On Strangeness*, ed. Margaret Bridges (Tubingen: Narr, 1990), 99-112.

²Cristina Malcolmson, "'What You Will': Social Mobility and Gender in *Twelfth Night*," *The Matter of Difference: Materialist Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, ed. Valerie Wayne (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), p. 38.

³*The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. Arthur Sherbo (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1968), vol. 7, p. 312.

⁴Howard writes, "from the time Viola meets Orsino in I. iv there is no doubt in the audience's mind of her heterosexual sexual orientation or her properly 'feminine' subjectivity" ("Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 39 [1988], p. 431).

⁵For Green, "in the end, we realize that the play's model for true love is not heterosexual, but rather 'homosexual' in Gallop's sense—the love of Antonio for Sebastian and, by a comforting displacement, of Orsino for Cesario *nee* Viola" ("Shakespeare's Violation: 'One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons'," *Reconsidering the Renaissance, Papers from the Twenty-First Annual Conference*, ed. Mario A. Di Cesare, [Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992], p. 338).

⁶Robert Kimbrough, "Androgyny Seen Through Shakespeare's Disguise," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 17-33.

⁷Keir Elam, "The Fertile Eunuch: *Twelfth Night*, Early Modern Intercourse, and the Fruits of Castration," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 47 (1996), 1-36, *passim*.

⁸I deliberately refrain from focusing on the aspect of the boy actor in Renaissance drama because I assume that the main evidence for Cesario's intriguing cross-gendered presence lies in the text itself. This assumption corresponds to the fact that today's performances can still convey the notion of sexual confusion. The use of boy actors, which is certainly important, is likely to have enhanced the possibilities inherent in the text but remains secondary for my purposes.

⁹Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety, Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 21.

¹⁰See Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988) for detailed information on the aspect of sex. I do not take his direction, not least because I assume that transcendence of monosexuality is possible within a definite sex, and that sex in this sense encompasses both male and female aspects without being pathological in the hermaphroditic sense.

¹¹Cf. Catherine Belsey, "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 167.

¹²Lisa Jardine, "Twins and Travesties: Gender, Dependency and Sexual Availability in *Twelfth Night*," *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 31.

¹³Jardine, p. 28.

¹⁴All Shakespeare quotations are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

¹⁵Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 5th ed. 1989), especially pp. 225-32.

¹⁶Cf. Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), especially p. 33.

¹⁷Keir Elam takes a different stance and proposes that Viola/Cesario continues to be a "castrated male" (p. 2).

¹⁸For the masculine role in Renaissance courtship see, for example, Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of The Courtier*, trans. Thomas Hoby, 1561 (New York: AMS, 1967), pp. 49-50.

¹⁹For the importance of the androgyne in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England see: Phyllis Rackin, "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA*, 102 (1987), pp. 29-41 and Robert Kimbrough.

²⁰David Schalkwyck writes apropos of *Love's Labor's Lost*, "[The] switching of masks and tokens shows how important it is that a declaration of Petrarchan love find its proper mark: precisely by turning the anonymity, the blankness or facelessness that the convention imposes on its addressee, against the lovers in a

context of embodied action, the women are able to expose the hollowness of each courtier's claims to dote on a specific woman who, by definition, must surpass all others in beauty and desirability. What the Princess and her women reveal and reject . . . is precisely the paradoxically disembodied effects of the Petrarchan epideictic praise for "a hand, a foot, a face, an eye" ("She never told her love": Embodiment, Textuality, and Silence in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 [1994], p. 388).

²¹Douglas E. Green goes further. For him Cesario is "the boy-actor inscribed in the text, sign of the masculine as prototype of subjectivity" (329). Although I would not identify the actor with his role, Green's essay clearly shows to what extent Cesario's demeanor can be associated with the exertion of masculine power.

²²Castiglione states, "But principally in her facions, maners, woordes, gestures and conversation . . . the woman ought to be much unlike the man. For right as it is seemlye for him to showe a certein manlinesse full and steadye, so doeth it well in a woman to have a tendernes, soft and milde, with a kinde of womanlie sweetnes in everye gesture of herres, that in goyng, standinge and speakinge what ever she lusteth, may alwayes make her appeere a woman without anye likenes of man" (Castiglione, p. 216).

²³Cristina Malcolmson, p. 33.

²⁴Marjorie Garber has applied Freud's idea of the uncanny to the Ghost in *Hamlet* because it articulates the "uncertainty whether something is dead or alive" and has connected the notion of the uncanny to "*repetition-compulsion*" and doublings, as, for example, in the existence of the Queen's "twin-husbands" (*Shakespeare's Ghost Writers, Literature as Uncanny Causality* [New York: Methuen, 1987], pp.128-29).

²⁵See Castiglione, pp. 219-20.

²⁶Belsey, p. 188.

²⁷See Rackin, p. 38 and Yu Jin Ko, "The Comic Close of *Twelfth Night* and Viola's *Noli me tangere*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), p. 404.

²⁸Penny Gay, *As She Likes It, Shakespeare's Unruly Women* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 37.

²⁹Yu Jin Ko, p. 404.

**The Condition of My Estate:
 Conjuring Identity and Estrangement
 in *As You Like It*
 by John R. Ford**

The forest of Arden in *As You Like It* destroys as playfully as it creates. In addition to its celebrated powers of defining and restoring relationships, Arden also has a magician's talent for making *individual* characters appear, disappear, re-appear—metamorphosed, it almost seems, before our very eyes. Some characters, like Adam, simply vanish into thin air at the very moment we are most absorbed by the condition of their estate. When Adam appears at the Duke Senior's camp, he provides a living refutation of Jaques' confident abstraction of the seventh age. We've just heard Jaques' "wise saws and modern instances" (II. vii. 156).¹ Here, the play seems to show us, is the thing itself. And then he's gone. Others, like Oliver and Duke Frederick, rush into the forest in their own person, only to vanish and then re-appear "converted" (the same term is used for both) into figures completely alien from their former selves:²

'Twas I. But 'tis not I. I do not shame
 To tell you what I was, since my conversion
 So sweetly tastes, being the thing I am.

(IV. iii. 135-37)

Duke Frederick, who invaded the forest "in his own conduct," is similarly "converted" in the "wild wood." Throughout the play, lesser characters are "conjured" in and out of existence by Arden: Sir Oliver Martext wanders in, then out, of being, as do William and a modest society of "old religious men," magicians, and uncles.

In the last scene of the play, hardly the time or the place to introduce new characters, Arden conjures up two more. First, just as the characters are beginning to recognize one another through the filter of the various disguises, rhetorical poses, and opaque dispositions that have so beguiled them throughout the play, in *walks* a mythological god, Hymen, to clarify truth in sight. And there follows an apparition even more startling. Just as we are accommodating ourselves to Hymen, even made strangely comforted by his assurance "[t]hat reason wonder may diminish" (V. iv. 138), enter Jaques de Boys, "the second son of Old Sir

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Rowland," who earnestly asks "audience for a word or two" (V. iv. 150-51). The sudden construction of Jaques' character is especially intriguing. He is mentioned by name as early as the second sentence of the play. But then this wisp of a character disappears, exiled from the play, forever it would seem, like Hisperia, the princess' gentlewoman, only to re-appear unannounced, uninvited, indecorously, at the play's formal resolution.³ Who might be his mother?

Why does this play take such self-conscious delight in the sudden, arbitrary creation and dissolution of so many characters? And why do so many of them *share* the same name, or near echo of that name: two Jaques, two Olivers, two Dukes? Does this play suggest a relationship between exile and identity? Between identity and mirrored social relation.⁴

Certainly, the exiles that wander through Arden at the beginning of the play represent a wide range of estrangements as almost every kind of social and familial chord is strained or broken: bonds of service, friendship, brotherhood, political loyalty. But these separations are particularly violent and unnatural, in that they hint that the violations of bonds that estrange one from another are also self-estranging. The near echo of Orlando and Oliver's names gives to their opening struggle a hint of psychomachia. The two Dukes are similarly "twinned." The "good" Duke is not even named, but distinguished from Frederick only by his seniority and his moral status. This doubling, as several critics have pointed out, is reinforced not only by the mirroring of similarly structured scenes featuring the two dukes but also by the tendency in performance to double the two roles.⁵

Mirrored blocking and lighting can create another kind of uneasy "doubling." In The Acting Company's 1997 production of *As You Like It*,⁶ precisely this technique was used to create the disturbing visual effect of a "natural perspective," allowing the audience to fuse, just for a moment, Rosalind and Jaques, perhaps the two most "distinct" characters in the play. When we first see Rosalind, she stands alone, upstage center, her back half-turned to the audience. The lighting emphasizes her isolation, creating a silhouette in exile. When we first see Jaques, we see him also alone, upstage center, half-turned, recreating Rosalind's silhouette, the soft sweep of Rosalind's dress now becoming the outline of Jaques' long, full coat. How do we respond to such an ambiguous, resonating image?⁷ How do we like it? Truly, in respect that it is Rosalind, it is a figure who magically presides over both the comic community and

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the music of this play. But in respect that it is Jacques, it is a figure whom the play must expel, unfit for Arden's dancing measures.

This curious triangulation, one that associates doubling with both estrangement and identity, is reflected in some of the play's central images as well as in the metamorphic design of many of its scenes. In fact, in *As You Like It*, the most powerful representations of both estrangement and consort, both alienation and relation, find verbal and visual expression in the same image of physical conflict. The wrestling scene, for example (I. ii), is central to *As You Like It*. The scene itself, indeed the several references to wrestling and falls, to better parts thrown down, to tripping up heels and hearts, define and relate the many currents of thought and feeling in this play, with delightful economy, into the "full stream of the world" of *As You Like It*. Oliver's unkind and uncivil assault on his brother breaks into open wrestling in the play's first scene.

Throughout the play the image will not only recur, but will transform itself wonderfully into the multiple shapes of human entanglement the play reflects. It will define the affectionate energies of two cousins who would challenge one another into merriment: "come, lame me with reasons" (I. iii. 5-6). The erotic play in the image hints not only at the antagonisms and violence that may shadow sexual desire, but at the strange power of love to *transform* violence into concord, to "take the part" of a better wrestler.⁸ Similarly, the religious and civic undertones of reverberant terms like "fall" and "overthrow" help establish how alien "the fashion of these times" is to some lost antique world (II. iii. 59). And yet the human features that most redeem us, kindred compassion, love, and foolery, all involve wrestling with affections: whether the internal and external battles Orlando must undergo before rescuing his brother; or his being "overthrown" by "something weaker" than Charles, whom Orlando has just subdued; or Duke Senior's good natured inclination to "cope" with Jaques in his more "sullen fits" (II. i. 67); or, indeed, the gamut of erotic consort provided by these "country copulatives." We may have lost the Golden World, but these are happy falls. Even the free, natural elements of the forest, the season's difference, define the playful ardor of Arden. The winter's wind has a healthy churlishness that "feelingly persuades" as it chides. And even the brooks engage in pleasing combat, as they "brawl along this wood" (II. i. 32).

In other words, in *As You Like It* words, no less than the actors who speak them, are required to "double" their parts, provoking in the audience the very dialectical conditions of imaginative

judgment that this play celebrates. Such verbal doubling teases us with the intriguing possibility that the conditions of "blessed bond of board and bed" that Hymen celebrates may themselves exist *in relation with*, may even be defined by, the unblessed conditions of separation and aggression (V. iv. 142). It is in performance, of course, that the wrestling scene becomes most suggestive as it articulates and unifies these contesting ideas.⁹ In Terry Hands' 1980 RSC production, according to John Bowe, the actor who played Orlando, the wrestling scene took on the magical and reconciling ambiguity of fairy tales: "In keeping with the fairy tale idea we had a fight that was reminiscent of professional wrestling at the local town hall between opponents grossly mismatched. It had moments of hilarity mixed with moments of alarming brutality."¹⁰

The 1996 Shenandoah Shakespeare Express performance also combined the mixed tones of fairy tales and professional wrestling.¹¹ Charles' proud declaration that he wrestles for his credit and his warning of the risks that might befall Orlando took on something of the comic bluster of a pre-fight interview, especially given the actor's use of a Philadelphia accent not unlike Rocky Balboa's. But this production went even further in exploiting the transforming and cathartic power of fairy tales, where worlds can be renewed by the virtue of "ifs." There was a comic, even cartoon-like, manner of representation of character and event. The actors had transformed themselves into the inanimate furniture of the wrestling ring. Four of them become the four posts that supported the ropes of the ring. But these were no ordinary posts. Indeed, they seemed almost human. Like the trees and running brooks and stones the Duke Senior finds in Arden, these posts were charged with human feeling (a metamorphosis that reverses, with comic precision, Jaques' later desire "to be sad and say nothing," to be, as Rosalind would translate it, "a post"). They deftly and literally sidestepped Charles' attempts to use them to bash Orlando's head. But later in the match, when the tables turn and Orlando, aroused and enlivened by Rosalind's encouragements, attempts the same battering tactic on Charles, these posts stiffened with a sympathetic pride and moral resolve reminiscent of a Mrs. Potts or Gaston the Candlestick in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. There were "sermons in stones and good in everything."

An even more radical metamorphosis was implicit in the 1998 production at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.¹² Such a theatre space, of course, renders all discrete boundaries between the conjured world of dramatic illusion and the concrete world of

theatregoers deeply problematical. But this production blurred the lines even more, as the action of the wrestling spilled from the stage into the "space" of the audience. Wrestlers jockeyed for advantage in the yard with the rest of us groundlings, who were ourselves wrestling for our credit, constantly shifting our ground both in order to get a clearer view and to keep out of harm's way. In the midst of the confusion, one member of the audience scampered up the temporary wooden steps leading to the stage where, at last, she might gain an unobstructed vantage point. It was Rosalind! If this were played upon most stages now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction.

A similar sense of metamorphosis often governs the movement within individual scenes. Every scene but one in the play begins by defining a social group. Sometimes the group constitutes a microcosmic community, such as "Duke Senior, Amiens, and two or three lords like foresters" (II. i); or "Duke [Frederick], lords, and Oliver" (III. i). Usually a pair of characters will enter, defining one of the several individual relationships the play will explore: Orlando and Adam; Rosalind and Celia; Orlando and Oliver; Touchstone and Audrey. Some of these pairs open more than one scene. Of these, Rosalind and Celia and Orlando and Adam are the two pairs most likely to initiate, and thus to help define, the shape and tone of a scene. Curiously, not a single scene is initiated by Rosalind and Orlando, even though, of all the civil couples heading towards this ark, this pair clearly occupies the center of the play's and the audience's interest. It is almost as if their relationship, saws of dead shepherds notwithstanding, requires others to define it. After all, neither Rosalind nor Orlando enters the forest in search of each other.¹³ In fact, each goes into Arden to share life with someone quite different. As Orlando and Adam resolve to seek their fortunes together, their language plights a troth:

Orlando. We'll go along together,
And ere we have thy youthful wages spent,
We'll light upon some settled low content.

Adam. Master go on, and I will follow thee
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.¹⁴

(II. iii. 66-70)

Celia and Rosalind seek a new life and a new home with a kindly and hospitable uncle: "Now go we in content / To liberty, and not to banishment" (I. iii. 134-35).

Both couples seek "content" in terms that revalidate the very human and social qualities we have earlier seen violated: the

bonds of service, kinship, love, freedom. "Content," of course, is a charged word in this play, one that invokes the powers, both learned and natural, of our sympathetic imaginations to "translate the stubbornness of fortune" into a world in which we might "willingly waste [our] time," as we like it.¹⁵ Rosalind and Celia will find their content, but not with whom they seek. Indeed, it is a special quality of Arden, as Duke Frederick and Oliver might tell you, that *no one* who enters this forest succeeds in finding whom he seeks.¹⁶ Travelers must be content, pleased with what they get.

It may be no accident that, as Orlando and Rosalind discover the ties of their relationship, the play begins to lose interest in the bond between Orlando and Adam. In fact, Adam completely disappears from the play after Act II, scene vii. Or are the ties that bind Orlando and Adam merely absorbed into other dimensions of the play, notably into the energies and mutual affection growing between Orlando and Rosalind, much as in a later play, set in a much harsher exile, where the acerbic and corrective wit of a Fool will be absorbed into his master? Has Adam been, as Amiens (and perhaps Peter Quince) might put it, "translated"?¹⁷

Celia's case is much more difficult since she remains a powerful, if increasingly silent, center of the play's interest until she discovers love at first sight with Oliver. But her invitation to Oliver—"Good sir, go with us" (IV. iii. 178)—marks the beginning of a curious estrangement from Rosalind. The two will never speak to one another again for the remaining life of the play. Indeed, these are Celia's final words in the play.¹⁸ And yet the two have grown strangely even more intimate. They will enter together in the play's final scene, exit together in mid-scene, and re-enter together as Ganymede undergoes yet another transformation, back to Rosalind. It is as if the two had become in "fact" what Celia had always claimed to be true in rhetoric. To her father, Celia had insisted:

. . . If she be a traitor
 Why so am I. We still have slept together,
 Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together,
 And whereso'er we went, like Juno's swans,
 Still we went coupled and inseparable.
 (I. iii. 68-72)

A few lines later Celia gently admonishes Rosalind:

Celia. I charge thee be not thou more griev'd than I am.
Rosalind. I have more cause.

speech on the manners of quarreling, a reading that brought out all the anxious and redemptive elements that commingle in an "if."²¹ As Touchstone (Robert Sicular) "nominate[s] in order . . . the degrees of the lie," he draws about him an audience, a community made of exiles who nonetheless share a delight in the play and wit of Touchstone's folly. But at the very moment of the fable's happy ending ("And they shook hands and swore brothers"), the new bonds—and the performance that conjured them—are threatened as the Duke Senior (Ted van Griethuysen), suddenly breaking away from the circle of listeners, thinks of his "real" enmity with his "real" brother. Pursuing the Duke, Touchstone woos him with the conclusion of his fable: "Your If is the only peacemaker: much virtue in If" (V. iv. 87, 101-02). Touchstone's words are consoling and restorative here, all the more powerful for their open acknowledgment of the conditions that define their limits. In this performance Touchstone's conditional "degrees of the lie" work as an especially sharp yet playful corrective to Jaques' essentialist nomination of the "seven ages of man."

But the conjuring suggests something else as well. Even for those characters who see themselves most clearly, there are elements of self-estrangement. In the mirroring and the doubling, as well as in the wrestling, there are intimations of strains that will be more fully explored in another comedy, *Twelfth Night*, the last of its kind.²² These are natural perspectives, that are and are not. Similarly, the transformation from conflict to atonement involves a precipitate of estrangement from someone. The loyalty and generosity Orlando acquires from Adam are essential to the intimacy and reciprocal trust he finally achieves with Rosalind. But one will require something of the other. Similarly, Rosalind's relationship with Celia, her other self, will be a critical part of Rosalind's multiple sense of self: as critic, as mimic, as provocateur, as actor, as lover.²³ Yet the last we see of these friends suggests an ambiguous intimacy. They enter and exit as one, like Juno's swans. Still, their silence haunts our memory of their voluble affability.

When we first meet Rosalind and Celia, Celia is attempting to coax Rosalind into her own proper spirits by "teaching" her "to forget a banished father" in dizzy, mirrored language that allows uncles and fathers to tumble together: "If my uncle thy banished father, had banished thy uncle, the Duke my father, so thou hadst still been with me, I could have taught my love to take thy father for mine" (I. ii. 4, 8-11). Rosalind's answer picks up the spirit of the game: resignation, even a hint of reproach, enlivened by the promise of imaginative play: "Well, I will forget the condition of

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my estate, to rejoice in yours" (I. ii. 14-15). Later, when choosing her own new identity in Arden, Celia selects "[s]omething that hath a reference to my state: / No longer Celia, but Aliena" (I. iii. 123-24). Her words are deeply suggestive. The near anagrammatic doubling of the two names suggests, not so much a new, as an ambiguous, resonating self. It also suggests another quirky truth this play celebrates: that it is only under the hard conditions of alienation that we ever discover the conditional liberty to name ourselves.

Delta State University

Notes

¹William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, The Arden Edition, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Routledge, 1975). All quotations are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

²The exception, of course, is Jaques. According to Alan Rickman, who played the character in the RSC's 1985 season, Jaques "doesn't change. He starts the play offstage under a tree by a stream, and ends it offstage sitting in a cave" ("Jacques in *As You Like It*," in *Players of Shakespeare 2: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, eds. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), p. 78. But even Jaques' self-sufficiency has a hint of volatility. Deeply resistant to Arden's charms, he must share the stage with a namesake who modestly helps to fulfill them. Harold Jenkins ("*As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 8 [1955], 40-51; rpt. in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard F. Dean, [rev. ed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967], 114-33) is convinced that "these two men-with the same name were originally meant to be one" (p. 118).

³Cynthia Marshall, in an unpublished paper, "The Doubled Jaques and Melancholic Traces in *As You Like It*," presented at the 1997 meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America, also examines the play's conjurings, its creations and dissolutions of identity and relation but from a Lacanian perspective.

⁴A great deal of recent critical discussion has centered on the strategies—usually the *failed* strategies—of *As You Like It* to reconcile an individual exploration of self with the mutual discovery of romantic love, both of which are sharply influenced and limited by a third pattern, the process of discovering one's "place" in the patriarchal social structures this play constructs. Louis Adrian Montrose in "The Place of a Brother" in *As You Like It: Social Process and Comic Form*" (in *Materialist Shakespeare: A History*, ed. Ivo Kamps [London: Verso, 1995], 39-70) writes of how Shakespeare's plays, especially this one, "explore the difficulty or impossibility of establishing or authenticating a self in a rigorously hierarchical and patriarchal society" (p. 47). See also, among others Barbara J. Bono, "Mixed Gender, Mixed Genre in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*," *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, Harvard English Studies, 14 (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 189-212; Peter B. Erickson, "Sexual Politics and the Social Structure in *As You Like It*," *Patriarchal Structure in Shakespearean Drama* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), 22-37, reprinted in *Shakespeare's Comedies*, ed. Gary Waller (London: Longman, 1991), 156-67; Cynthia

Marshall's "The Doubled Jaques" and "Wrestling as Play and Game in *As You Like It*," *Studies in English Literature*, 33 (1993), 265-87. Camille Wells Slight's *Shakespeare's Comic Commonwealths* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1993) is somewhat more sanguine. She argues that *As You Like It*, particularly in the "ritualistic language" of its conclusion, "which subsumes individual voices within the expression of communal solidarity, simultaneously emphasizes individual differences" (p. 212). My argument shares several of Slight's paradoxical premises.

⁵See, for example, Sylvan Barnet, "As You Like It on the Stage," in *As You Like It*, ed. Albert Gilman (New York: Signet, 1987), 238-50; and James E. Hirsh, *The Structure of Shakespearean Scenes* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 114-15. Hirsh also describes a "shared prominence" between Duke Senior and Jaques, two characters often presented as antithetical.

⁶Directed by Liviu Ciulei and performed on tour at The Germantown (Tennessee) Performing Arts Center, 29 January 1997.

⁷The warrant for such "doubling" of the witty Rosalind and the melancholy Jaques can be seen in Cynthia Marshall's "The Doubled Jaques." Marshall sees in Rosalind's disguise a simultaneous gain and loss of "self": "The disguised Rosalind is, or becomes, the real Rosalind. . . . Melancholy has displaced Rosalind from herself. By means of her banishment and subsequent disguise she recovers her spirits. . . . Displacement is shown to be the key to characterological recognition" (p. 4). Sophie Thompson, who played Rosalind in the RSC's 1989 production, remembers that "[as] Rosalind I was very interested in Jaques. . . . I felt Rosalind had a strong sense of melancholy in her, which is why she clued into all those things she hadn't experienced but knew instinctively. This is why Jaques intrigues her. . ." ("Rosalind [and Celia] in *As You Like It*," *Players of Shakespeare 3: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, eds. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993], p. 83).

⁸See D. J. Palmer's "As You Like It and the Idea of Play" in *Shakespeare's Wide and Universal Stage*, eds. C. B. Cox and D. J. Palmer (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), 74-85, on sport's transformations.

⁹For alternative readings of the wrestling scene, see Marshall's "Wrestling as Play and Game" and Montrose.

¹⁰John Bowe, "Orlando in *As You Like It*," in *Players of Shakespeare 1: Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Twelve Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Philip Brockbank (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), p. 70. D. J. Palmer also discusses how "[w]restling makes sport out of conflict" (p. 75).

¹¹Directed by Ralph Alan Cohen and on tour at Jobe Hall Auditorium, Delta State University, Cleveland, Mississippi, 18 April 1996.

¹²Directed by Lucy Bailey. The performance I saw was on 8 August 1998.

¹³Peter Erickson argues differently that "Rosalind and Orlando approach the forest in strikingly different ways. Rosalind's mission is love. . . . Orlando, for his part, does not go forward in pursuit of love until after he has become friends with Duke Senior" (p. 226). But while Rosalind may feel something of the contagion of Sylvius's laments—"This shepherd's passion / Is much upon my fashion" (II. iv. 58-59)—Orlando is the last person Rosalind expected to find in Arden, or else she might have packed more than a doublet and hose.

¹⁴John Bowe describes Adam as "a main character and influence in the story of Orlando. . . . He is the one who is closest to Orlando throughout the first half of the play" (p. 71).

¹⁵John Russell Brown discusses further implications of this term in his 1957 essay "Love's Order and the Judgment of *As You Like It*," reprinted in *Twentieth*

Century Interpretations of "As You Like It," ed. Jay L. Halio (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 80.

¹⁶Sophie Thompson writes that "I found it was important when I played Rosalind to remember that she doesn't go into the forest *in order* to meet Orlando" (p. 81).

¹⁷See Slight's on the influence of Celia and Adam in allowing Rosalind and Orlando "to form recognizable social identities" (p. 204).

¹⁸Fiona Shaw and Juliet Stevenson in "Celia and Rosalind in *As You Like It*" in *Players of Shakespeare 2: Further Essays in Shakespearean Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, eds. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988) interpret this silence not so much in terms of "separation" but as a signal for a metamorphosis the play itself undergoes: "the play becomes another beast, a creature of new dimensions into which each character's separate through line or private experience is absorbed" (p. 70).

¹⁹See especially John Russell Brown; Helen Gardner's 1959 essay "*As You Like It*," reprinted in *As You Like It*, ed. Albert Gilman (New York: Signet, 1987), 212-30; and Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (New York: Methuen, 1974), 185-219.

²⁰See Harold Jenkins. Susan Snyder's "*As You Like It: A Modern Perspective*" in *As You Like It*, eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, The New Folger Shakespeare Library (New York: Washington Square, 1997), 231-42, argues that "the landscape created by the play's dialogue is a kind of composite literary wilderness . . . a construction of the mind" that provides the freedom of a "time-out" (p. 232-33). For a more skeptical view of Arden's transformative powers, see Erickson: "We are apt to assume that the green world is more free than it actually is" (p. 158).

²¹Directed by Lawrence Boswell at the Landsburgh Theatre, Washington, D.C., 27 March 1997. See, for examples the reviews of Lloyd Rose, "*As You Like It: A Romp in the Woods*," *Washington Post*, 18 Feb. 1997, D1+; and Bob Mondello "*So That's the Way You Like It*," *City Paper*, 20 Feb. 1997, n. pag.

²²See Anne Barton's "*As You Like It and Twelfth Night: Shakespeare's Sense of an Ending*" in *Shakespearean Comedy, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 14* (New York: Crane, 1972), 160-80, for an extended discussion of the differences in the manner in which *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* create dramatic forms that contain within their own designs elements of fragmentation.

²³Many critics, especially in recent years, have argued that whatever discoveries we finally make about the rich resourcefulness of Rosalind's subjectivity, particularly as she defines her *gendered* self, are seriously undermined by the fact that Shakespeare wrote the part of Rosalind for a male actor. See, for example, Jean E. Howard's *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1994), 118-20. But that "fact" only makes the implications of the epilogue all the more slyly consonant with the spirit of this play. For the actor's own "self" here is a role he has constructed, composed of many simples, for the purpose of the epilogue. The boy actor, as he speaks these lines, is *performing*. He is at play, in every sense of the word.

You Can Call Me Al: Looking at *Looking for Richard* by David Linton

I. Introduction

Let's face it: within both the academic community and the world of acting, being described as "a Shakespearean" carries great clout. When people ask what your specialty is, if you reply, "I'm a Shakespearean," no matter how modest your tone, the look of awe (or fear) that flicks across their faces is testimony to your power and authority. It's as if you'd said, "I'm a priest," or "I'm a cop." And in some sense Shakespeareans, whether academics or actors, are both priests and cops. They are keepers of the canon—interpreters, mediators and enforcers.

While canon workers have particular responsibilities, they also are subjected to particular temptations, the chief of which is hubris. Al Pacino's film *Looking for Richard* is an example of the victory of hubris over modesty. Rather than examining Pacino's film, however, this essay is concerned primarily with the materials surrounding the film, the "metatexts" which influence how the film is received or even whether audiences go to the movie at all.

Elsewhere, I have devised a taxonomy of metacanon texts¹ which describes four categories of "texts" that determine which works come to be included in a literary canon. One of the categories in the taxonomy is called promotional metatexts, and it is with such texts that I am dealing in this essay.

Promotional metatexts of either films or literary works are the collection of advertisements, press releases, jacket blurbs, posters, photographs, recordings, teaching materials, and the like whose purpose is to gain or maintain canonical standing for the work they support. In contemporary terms, canonical standing is measured by sales, attendance figures, critical praise, awards, adoption by elite groups of consumers (professors, festival audiences)—primarily recognition linked to financial success. Today the business community refers to promotional metatexts as part of a "marketing strategy." The remainder of this essay is devoted to a case study of the promotional metatexts employed on behalf of the film *Looking for Richard*.

II. The Promotional Metatext Package

Promotional materials for new film releases commonly consist of a press release describing the film and providing background information about everyone associated with it, eight by ten glossy black and white photographs and color slides, a poster, and "slicks" used for newspaper and magazine ads. There are sometimes different versions of these items, their use determined by decisions as to what will work best with a particular readership (in the case of newspaper ads), or targeted potential audiences. Posters and slicks also come in a wide variety of sizes even though they may be otherwise identical. In addition, supplementary materials such as an Educator's Guide or glossy booklets for distribution at film festivals or as mailings to members of the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences are produced for films thought to have appeal to teachers and professors or which the producers and distributors hope are contenders for awards.

Regarding *Looking for Richard*, I examined a full set of materials: press kit, slicks, photos, posters, promotional booklet, educational viewer's guide and even a CD recording of the movie's sound track.

Though in the film itself Al Pacino repeatedly asserts his respect for Shakespeare's work and his desire to bring to moviegoers a rich, entertaining encounter with Shakespeare's genius, an examination of the promotional materials brings to mind a slightly modified line from another play, "The laddie doth protest too much, me thinks." Far more than a paean to Shakespeare, the material offers a display of actor/director/producer ego which is completely unrestrained.

The most blatant display of Pacino's presence and perspective is on the poster for the film which is also the basic element in all of the graphic designs used in ads, post cards, etc. Let us begin with the name of the film itself. At the bottom of the poster (figure 1) is the title:

Al Pacino's
looking for richard
A four hundred year old
work-in-progress.

This line deserves close examination. First, the main part of the title (*looking for richard*) is in lower case letters, a practice that is followed on the CD cover as well and in the credits at the bottom of the poster but not in the press kit, educational materials, or photo captions. Note the pun in the use of the apostrophe in

"Pacino's." The possessive form tells us that the film is Pacino's creation, but as a contraction it tells us that he is engaged in a search for someone named "richard," and the rest of the line informs us that the search is part of a project which has been going on for four centuries ("a four hundred year old work in progress"). Pacino is hereby positioned in a historical context as one of a long string of investigators who have been pursuing an elusive fugitive named "richard," all the more mysterious for the absence of a last name—richard who? Here Pacino evokes his *Serpico*, *Cruising*, and *Sea of Love* character, the relentless cop driven to bring the culprit to heel. It seems to me that what this suggests is that Shakespeare began writing a story four hundred years ago which neither he nor anyone since has been able to figure out how to finish. Now we are offered the hope that a guy from the streets of New York City, a tough, savvy, swaggering man in black leather, an American with the Empire State Building towering behind him, might finally solve the riddles which Shakespeare created.

The most important part of the title, though, is that Pacino is *looking for "richard,"* not *Richard III*. What does it mean for the king to lose his numerals—not to mention his capital letter? I think that this is, in fact, what the project is all about: to make the king a commoner. Pacino, the quintessential New York actor, wouldn't be bothered chasing down—or playing—an aristocrat, let alone a missing king. That is, unless he could find within the king a commoner, the man under the crown and the trappings of royalty. Pacino wants us to see the link between Michael Corleone, the Mafia Don, and the similarly ambitious, grasping King Richard.

The common man persona is central to nearly all of Pacino's career. It is an identity he has shaped and explored repeatedly beginning with the decision to adopt the familiar "Al" as his professional name and to jettison the "Alfredo" he was given at birth. From his first significant film role as a junky in *The Panic in Needle Park* through three versions of *The Godfather*, the crazed bank robber in *Dog Day Afternoon*, the controversial undercover cop role in *Cruising*, the hustling salesman in *Glengarry Glen Ross*, the defiant former army officer in *Scent of a Woman*, and the blustering mayor in *City Hall*, Pacino has crafted a character of the streets, at home with the hustle, a dweller in the dark places, a character who, though flawed, can rise to moments of grace. His role in *Serpico* best captures the complexity of the balancing act.

The unifying element in both the film and the promotional materials for *Looking for Richard* is the attempt to reconcile the commoner and the king—to find the "common denominator," as

it were. Yet there is constant irony in this pursuit. Al Pacino is no longer a common man; he is a star—rich and famous, the winner of an Academy Award for Best Actor and a nominee seven other times. He is, if not a king, at least an American prince; he lives a life of privilege. Yet the actual king whose crown Pacino seeks is Shakespeare's. Not only does he, as actor, assail the part of Richard Duke of Gloucester, he positions himself at the creative center as director, producer, narrator and host. These elements within the design of the film are underscored, as they should be, in the accompanying metatexts.

If Pacino is looking for Richard, where does he look? The poster shows him in New York City, in front of a bus stop on West 34th Street just off 9th. Avenue. He is facing west, *away* from England, and in the background the Empire State Building, symbol of the American Empire and one of the most significant architectural landmarks in the country, rises into the sky. The press kit, in a mispunctuated sentence in the first paragraph, unintentionally states the perspective: "Pacino takes the cameras on a free-spirited comic romp through the streets of New York to the birthplace of Shakespeare, and finally, to an emotionally-charged production of 'Richard III.'" Pacino has so appropriated Shakespeare that one might well conclude that Stratford-upon-Avon was actually one of Brooklyn's ethnic enclaves.

It is a rainy, gray day, the mood evocative of the film *Taxi Driver*. Behind Pacino on the bus shelter's advertising space is a head shot poster of Pacino in crown and period clothing, bearded and gazing directly at the camera/viewer. At the bottom of this poster within a poster the words "RICHARD III" are in all caps. If it were not for the crown, the picture would resemble a wanted poster mug shot.

Although King Richard is pictured directly behind the standing Pacino, the actor has his back to the man he's looking for. It's some other Richard Pacino seeks. He stands in black leather jacket, black pants, shirt, belt and shoes with a black baseball cap on his head turned backwards in the popular, hip, street style. His arms are crossed in a confident pose; a happy smile is on his face. Everything about him is meant to contrast with the picture behind him. Richard is serious and dour; Al is happy and vibrant; Richard is photographed in black and white; Al is in living color; Richard wears a heavy crown; Al sports an everyman cap. And though two cabs are going past on a rainy day, Al faces away from them waiting for a New York Transit # 34 Crosstown Bus. Pacino expects to find Richard somewhere in New York, perhaps on a

bus. His look assures us that the search will be a pleasant one with a satisfactory outcome, as does the critic's quotation at the top of the poster. "A true revelation. Sharp, funny and illuminating," states the line, and in smaller type we see that the person being quoted is "Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES." Lest anyone think that the movie is "serious," always a danger with productions of Shakespeare—even the comedies—Maslin reassures us that it is "funny." Yet, the presence of the *Times* reference gives weight and prestige to the film. It's the sophisticated movie-goer's assurance that Pacino has not trivialized the work, has shown "respect," as the Godfather would put it, while managing to invest it with real entertainment value.

Displayed across the top of the poster, above the border of the photograph in red, are the names of five of the actors featured in the film. Their first names are in upper and lower type, the last names in all caps (Alec BALDWIN, Kevin SPACEY, etc.). They are in alphabetical order; Pacino's is second, between Baldwin and Quinn, so that there is an appearance of a shared endeavor, a mutual quest for the elusive "richard," whose name is in all lower case letters in the title. Though there is an appearance of egalitarianism, nonetheless, these are *STARS*, their names are above the poster, as Pacino's is above the title.

The poster embodies a series of contrasts:

- The crown vs. the cap;
- The elite *New York Times* endorsement floating above a pedestrian bus shelter;
- The regal costuming in the bus shelter poster vs. Pacino's street clothing;
- The allusion to English history vs. the New York street scene;
- The dark and serious King vs. the happy, smiling actor;
- The bearded King vs. the clean shaven New Yorker;
- The lower case and minute type face in the credits under the picture vs. the red, all-caps actors' names above it;
- The lower case "shakespeare" vs. the upper case "Pacino";
- The familiarity of the name "richard" vs. the capitalized and numerated "RICHARD III."

It is this constant state of conflict between elite and popular, status and common which reveals the problems the marketing strategists were contending with.

On the poster, Shakespeare's name appears only once in lower case letters and very small type embedded in the long string of

credits which are common at the bottom of all ads and posters for movies. In contrast, Pacino's name appears seven times and his photograph twice, once in black and white as Richard III on the poster on the bus shelter and once as Al Pacino, the happy actor, standing in front of the poster of himself.

The seven name references are displayed as follows:

1. as one of the five stars listed at the top of the poster;
2. as part of the film's title, "Al Pacino's looking for richard";
3. in the credits: "a film by al pacino";
4. in the credits in the list of stars;
5. in the credits: "narration written by al pacino and . . .";
6. in the credits: "produced by . . . & al pacino";
7. in the credits: "directed by al pacino."

All the lower case type seems an attempt to emphasize the common man motif and to provide some balance for the ego display of all those name references and the two images.

Incidentally, the practice of playing down Shakespeare in promotional material for film versions of his plays has a long history. Consider two recent examples using very different means of playing against the source. The poster and display ad for Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night* emphasize the kinky cross-dressing, gender-bending elements and allude to several recent movies which worked that territory: *Pricilla*, *Queen of the Desert*, *To Wong Foo*, *Thanks for Everything*, *Julie Newmar*, and *The Birdcage*. The playwright's name is cleverly buried in the credits in tiny cursive letters hidden in the folds of one of the actors' sleeves. Finding Shakespeare's name is like looking for an especially well hidden NINA in an Al Hirshfeld cartoon. In comparison, the display ad for Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* is daring and arrogant. The film is boldly titled *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, yet we see twelve guns wielded by an assortment of punks and hoodlums framing a burning heart hovering above the actors Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes who are kissing passionately. This poster says, in effect: "You want Shakespeare? We'll give you Shakespeare! Then we'll rip your lungs out!!" The fact that this Shakespeare is a thoroughly modern dude is underscored by the Web Site address at the bottom: www.romeoandjuliet.com.

Finally, all productions, whether on film or stage, involve editing—if by editing we mean the expression of editorial judgment by those who mount the play. Casting is an editorial judgment and, as has been lamented, Kenneth Branagh's use of music in *Hamlet* was an editorial judgment worthy of second

thought. Usually, though, when we talk about editing Shakespeare, we are referring to what line cuts were made, what was deleted. Consider then what is edited *out* of Pacino's poster for his film about *Richard III*. There is no hint that Pacino's Richard has a disability; Pacino stands fully erect with no sign of physical anomaly. Nor is there any indication that the film is actually a documentary, a kiss of death at the box office. And there is little hint that the story was set in England nor that it is based in actual history; neither England nor history packs the house.

Several other editing details deserve mention. A telephone booth poster in the background has been airbrushed or digitally altered so as to efface the identity of the sponsors (though I think it is an ad for the circus) as has a large wall mural advertisement in the distance. There are legal reasons for such changes as well as the desire not to allow any other product to enter the viewer's awareness without a fee being paid. Finally, a hotel sign has been stuck on a building on the right edge of the poster. It says "New York." There is no such sign at the real location. This sign is a modified version of an actual sign on a building a block away on the opposite side of the street which says "New Yorker." Again, perhaps for legal considerations, the sign has been altered but, more to the point, it serves to inform the viewer that the movie is set in New York City. The fact that The New Yorker Hotel is owned by the Unification Church and that Pacino might want to avoid association with the Rev. Moon could have been an additional consideration, but here I am entering the realm of speculation which could be supported only by future interviews with the behind-the-scenes graphics and marketing team responsible for the poster's design.

III. The Glossy Photographs

Three glossy black and white photographs accompanied the press materials I received (see figures 2-4). Of course, all three photographs feature Al Pacino, none of the captions mentions Shakespeare, and all three identify the film as, "Al Pacino's 'LOOKING FOR RICHARD.'"

One picture is a bust shot of the star in kingly garb, a crown atop his head, gilded battle armor on his chest. His face is bearded, and he stares out at the camera and viewer with a grim gaze. The background is out of focus, so the actor appears to emerge from a gauzy haze, the rest of the world a blur, the star the only discernible feature.

The Upstart Crow

Another photo has Pacino and Winona Ryder (who plays Lady Anne) seated on the edge of a low stage or platform. Both are in street clothes, Pacino in the reversed cap and black shirt, pants, and shoes he wears whenever he is not in Richard garb. The photo captures him in the middle of a gesture. His legs are spread wide; he gestures with his right hand and holds a riding crop in the left. He is looking directly out toward the camera. At his side, Ms. Ryder sits slightly slumped forward. Her shoulders and neck are bare, and a hint of cleavage is teasingly revealed. Her knees are together, her hands clasped atop them. She is looking toward Pacino, passively taking in his talk though he seems to be ignoring her.

The third photo is a candid shot taken during rehearsal of the battle scene at the end of the play. In the foreground, out of focus, a camera and microphone can be detected, and in the background the crew is going about the work of setting up a new shot. This is a moment between takes, and Pacino is seen in a mailed and quilted field jacket. He is laughing at something, perhaps the fact that the feathered shaft of an arrow is sticking out of the left side of his chest over his heart. The picture shows a man impervious to pain, immune to one of the arrows of outrageous fortune, an actor caught up in the amusing deceit of the art of stagecraft.

IV. Quoting the Critics

The use of quotations from reviews and criticism is a case of what I have called metatextual symbiosis. Reviews do not originate as promotional metatexts but are instead from a different genre, critical metatexts. In the process of being appropriated into the service of promotional purposes, they undergo transformations. They are morphed via typographic modification, converted from portions of sentences into headlines.

From the mat of display ads and dingbats provided by the publicity office and ads clipped from various newspapers, I assembled a collection of fourteen endorsements from movie critics, three of them different versions of Janet Maslin's review in *The New York Times*.

Although all of the lines or words attributed to reviewers were placed in quotation marks, there was considerable liberty taken with them. Critics do not usually write in punchy, one word sentences, nor do they tend to end sentences with exclamation marks. Yet every one of the reviews quoted was laced with exclamations and fragments out of context. Here, as nearly as can be approximated in type, are the lines used. Capitalization and

punctuation are as in the original presskit, although a variety of type-sizes was employed:

Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES
"A COMPLETE DELIGHT!"

Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES
"A COMPLETE DELIGHT!
Quick-Witted And Illuminating."

Janet Maslin, THE NEW YORK TIMES
"A TRUE REVELATION.
Sharp, Funny and Illuminating.
Mr. Pacino acts Richard's role with the crackling
intensity of his great film performances."

SISKEL & EBERT
"TWO THUMBS UP . . .
WAY UP!"

SISKEL & EBERT
"TWO THUMBS UP . . . WAY UP!
Highly Original!"

Gene Siskel, SISKEL & EBERT
"EXCITING, FUNNY AND FASCINATING!
A Major Achievement!"

John Anderson, NEWSDAY
"SPECTACULAR!
Irrestible!"

Peter Travers, ROLLING STONE
"OUTRAGEOUS FUN!
Pays Major Dividends."

Larry King, USA TODAY
"SPELLBINDING!
A Great Motion Picture."

Lisa Schwarzbaum, ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY
"INVENTIVE, FUNNY AND DARING!
A Real Kick In The Pants!"

Bruce Williamson, PLAYBOY MAGAZINE
"***! SUPERBLY ENTERTAINING!"

Dennis Cunningham, WCBS-TV
"GLORIOUS, INSPIRED AND THRILLING!
Joyful! A Must-See!"

The Upstart Crow

Jeannie Williams, USA TODAY
 "OSCAR-CALIBER!
 A Classic!"

Geoffrey Cheshire, NY PRESS
 "HILARIOUS!
 The Most Entrancing Movie Fun Of The Year!"

Georgia Brown, VILLAGE VOICE
 "MESMERIZING!
 A Plume In Al Pacino's Hat."

The reviews have been truncated and abstracted, just as the play the film is examining has been reconstituted. *Richard III* is a serious, dark, grim tale of devilish ambition. The scant touches of humor are found in fleeting moments of irony. Yet the reviewers' lines selected to promote Pacino's documentary invite one to expect "comedy tonight!" In the passages above, the words "fun" or "funny" occur five times augmented by "joyful," "hilarious," "quick-witted," "a complete delight," and "a real kick in the pants." Missing are "tragic," "touching," "sad" or any other expression which might undercut the upbeat, happy, smily-faced image of Pacino waiting for the bus. The cumulative effect of the picture and the blurbs is to create expectations that the film is, if not an outright comedy, at least a send-up or parody. One almost expects a Leslie Nielsen version of Shakespeare. The "Richard III" on the poster within the poster might as well be the comedy sequel of *Richard II*, rather than the sequel to *Henry VI, Part 2* which it actually is.

One might argue that the excerpts misrepresent both the reviewers and the film reviewed. Some of the critics actually did include considerations of the "serious" aspects of the film, and the film itself, while often funny and irreverent, certainly aspires to and at times succeeds at delving into the dark aspects of Shakespeare's character.

Among the sources quoted, a full range of authorities is marshalled: two television reviewers, six from newspapers, and three from magazines including *Rolling Stone* and *Playboy*.

Exclamation marks abound and, in flagrant violation of custom, quotation marks embrace words and phrases which the reviewer never used. There are no exclamation marks in Maslin's actual review.² In the case of John Anderson's *Newsday* citation ("Spectacular! Irrestible!"), not only did he not exclaim in this fashion, he did not even use the word "spectacular" anywhere in his review, though the word "irrestible" is lifted fairly from his line ". . . manages to demystify the play and make it irresistable at the same time."³

Of course, few readers are so naive as to believe the hyperbolic expostulations of the advertising copywriter—or so we think. Yet the widespread and well-established practice of excerpting reviews implies that those in marketing believe it does work, and the sanctified approval of the *Times* probably goes a long way towards overcoming the skepticism of many educated readers. Furthermore, the *Playboy* citation raises its readers' hopes of catching a glimpse of winsome Winona Ryder in some state of undress, while the *Rolling Stone* mention of "Outrageous Fun!" appeals to the putative iconoclasm of its readers.

Whether any of these details has any bearing on audience reception of the film itself once it has been viewed remains to be seen, and, to the best of my knowledge, has never been studied. It is interesting to note that only one review line, a portion of the longest version of the three Maslin excerpts, alludes to anyone's acting. Those preparing the copy apparently decided to emphasize the *film*. This conclusion is supported by the repeated promotional use of the phrases "Al Pacino's . . ." and "a film by Al Pacino."

V. Conclusions

Space does not permit a detailed discussion of the viewer's guide provided by Youth Media International or YMI (say those letters out loud for an appropriate expression of adolescent angst!), but a few brief comments might capture the flavor.

High school and college teachers are invited to engage their students in three "activities" with the following headings:

1. "Run for the Hills—It's Shakespeare"
2. "Richard III Is Alive and Well and Living on Melrose Place"
3. "If I'd Meant That, I'd Have Said It"

The first activity aims to break through the barriers, prejudices or fears students are thought to have about Shakespeare. The second, and probably the more problematic, objective is to humanize the evil Richard. Here it is suggested that students be told that the historical Richard III was not "deformed" and that Shakespeare was using disability as a dramatic device. Then, in a suggestion sure to enrage any supporters of a particular former American president, the guide suggests that "students might list another Richard (Richard Nixon), fictional characters like J. R. of *Dallas* or Kimberly of *Melrose Place*, the Menendez brothers or Hitler. Analyzing the behavior of these figures and comparing

them with Richard III will show students that such traits as lust for power, greed, and selfishness are timeless."

No matter what one thinks of Nixon, grouping him with the Menendez brothers, Hitler, and two fictional bad guys may be at least as great a poetic license as any Shakespeare ever took, not to mention further blurring the distinctions between reality and mediated experience, a distinction already severely strained for many. To make matters worse, placing Hitler in this group could be said to trivialize the monstrosity of the Holocaust.

Gary Taylor's discussion of "the mechanisms of cultural renown"⁴ is especially apt when applied to Pacino's film—apt both of the film and of Pacino's own self-fashioning. Not only is Pacino engaged in the ongoing, organic process of "reinventing Shakespeare," he is also reinventing himself in the tradition of other stars like Michael Jackson, Madonna, Dennis Hopper, Harvey Keitel, and Dennis Rodman. This time he has cast himself in the role of Shakespeare manque, or, to employ an appropriate expression from the streets, a Shakespeare "wannabe." Although the poster credits say that the film is "based on richard iii by william shakespeare," the rest of the poster tells a different tale. This is Al's story, and, as with so many other examples in the practice of Shakespeareotics, to employ Taylor's useful phrase,⁵ it is a thorough job of projection. But then, if Pacino wrote, directed, produced, and starred in the movie, he may as well be in the projection booth too.

A modern-day publicist might say, "The ad's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the crowd." For many it is the poster, display ads, and related metatextual materials through which the text itself, be it play, film, book, music, or television program, is first encountered. When it comes to assessing the popular perception and reception of Shakespeare films in this time of skillfully managed images, of course one wants to look at the films themselves to see how the social construct known as "Shakespeare" is doing. However, it is also important to give due consideration to the rest of the package, the wrappings, as it were. These materials may play a significant role in shaping the audience and its experience.

Marymount Manhattan College

Notes

¹David Linton, "A Taxonomy of Metacanonical Texts," in *Other Voices, Other Views*, ed. Helen Ostovich, in press.

²Janet Maslin, "Looking for Richard," *The New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1996, p. B.

³John Anderson, "Looking for Richard," *Newsday*, Oct. 11, 1996, p. B 9.

⁴Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 5.

⁵Taylor, p. 6.

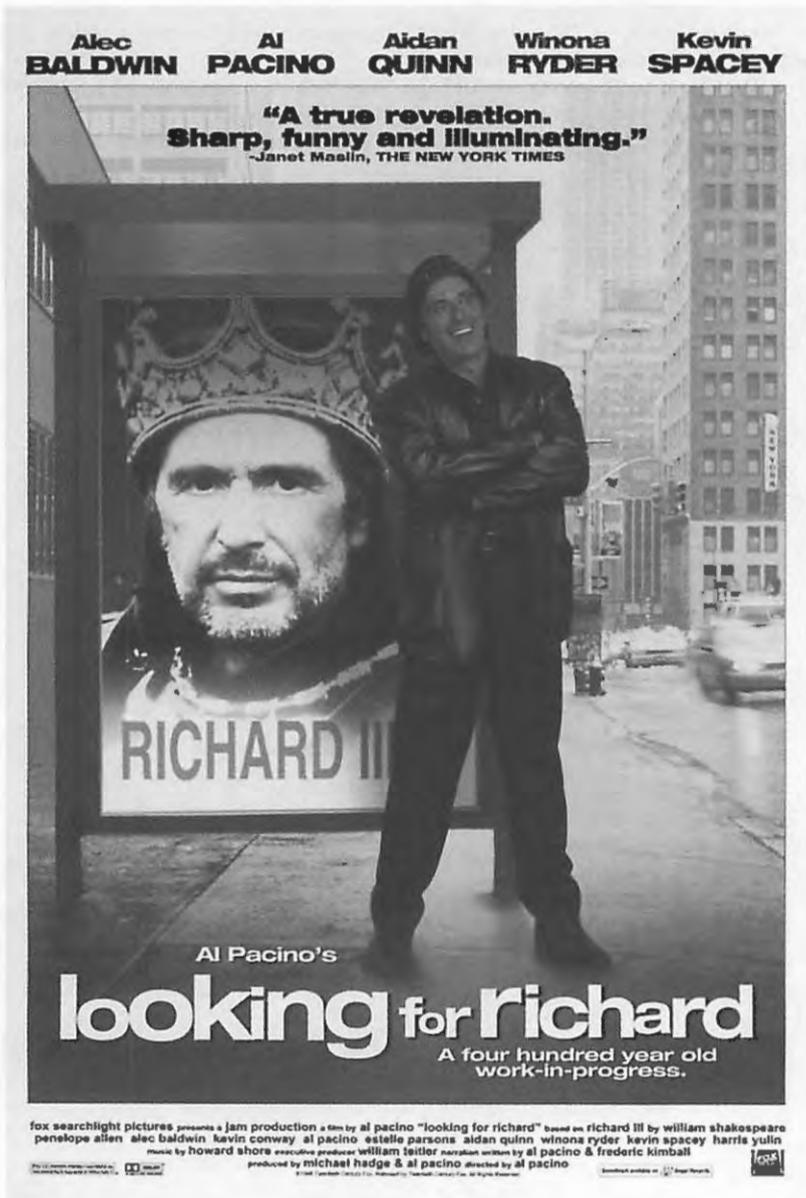


Figure 1. Promotional Poster for Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.



Figure 2. Al Pacino in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.



Figure 3. Al Pacino and Winona Ryder in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.



Figure 4. Al Pacino and cast in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard*.

The King's Three Bodies: The Textual King and The Logic of Obedience in *Henry V* by Walter W. Cannon

For forth he goes, and visits all his host,
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
And calls them brothers, friends, and countrymen.²
(IV. Chorus. 32-34)

art thou officer,
Or art thou base, common, and popular?
(IV. i. 37-38)

Instead of the celebration of English unity and popular support for Henry's campaign that the fourth Chorus in *Henry V* has breathlessly promised, the "little touch of Harry in the night" turns us toward serious questions concerning Henry's veracity, his relation to his subjects and his subjects' obedience to him, and ultimately Henry's own authority.¹ As Henry wrestles with Bates' and Williams' questions about moral responsibility, we witness a telling semantic slide which moves us from the initial situation of mutual respect between King and soldier to analogies involving father and son, master and servant, until we see Henry in his soliloquy refiguring the relationship as king and slave, thus precluding any possibility for real obedience and unconsciously undermining his own authority. What begins with a seemingly sophisticated understanding of the nature of monarchical authority, the means for galvanizing popular support in the service of legitimacy, and the necessity for freedom in obedience, ends with Henry betraying his own ideological absolutism, making him vulnerable to competing claims of authority and power. How and why does this happen?

In his soliloquy on ceremony, Henry, sounding more like Richard II than Richard III, seems to negotiate an odd move from his physical body to the metaphysical one wherein he can gaze down with the "forehand and vantage of a king." If at the beginning of this scene Henry wishes to convince Williams and the audience that he has a human, sympathetic connection with them despite the ceremony that makes him a king, later in the soliloquy he seems intent to sever the common connection by recasting himself in a superior position to the "slaves" and "lackeys" with "vacant minds" and "gross brains" over whom he rules. Thomas Cartelli notes that Henry's insight into the function of ceremony leads him into more rather than less vulnerability:

Henry's emphasis on ceremony as the sole basis of distinction between himself and ordinary men initially promises an ideological breakthrough that will disarm Williams' grievance of its affective power by giving substance to Henry's earlier "disguised" comment that "the king is but a man, as I am" (IV. i. 101). It soon becomes apparent, however, that Henry's heterodoxy is a purely rhetorical impulse that mirrors the emptiness of the king's first body; his speech is a text only the king's second body can write, its perspective one that only a king who is nothing but king can share.³

Employing the well-known terms of medieval kingship, the fiction of the king's two bodies,⁴ helps us to understand the vulnerability of Henry's ideological bent. But I would like to propose a third body, the textual body, (perhaps the "rhetorical impulse" that Cartelli mentions) as a significant way to understand the relationship between king and subject, master and servant, and the nature of obedience. This third body is the total presentation deployed by the monarch—ceremony, royal progresses, exhortations, proclamations, speech, gesture, even the marshalling of armies—which finally must be constructed, read and interpreted by the people. And the function of this third body is to give textual substance to the disjunctive facets of the king that are believed to exist outside of discourse—metaphysical authority and flesh and blood power. The more unified or seamless the textual presentation is read, and the more unconscious people are that they are actually constructing this text, the more likely that subjects will accept the king's legitimacy.⁵ This "seamless" presentation constitutes a critical point in the argument because unless subjects perceive the connection between the king's two bodies as "natural," legitimate power remains suspect. Obedience then, becomes "real" rather than coerced, that which is felt in the heart instead of exterior pressure. Subjects must be able to read the king's textual body as knitting together the metaphysical clothes of state with the royal robes in front of their eyes—connecting the office of the king with his flesh and blood particularity, both his right and his power.

Williams' questions in this scene constitute one subject's reading of the king's textual body which challenge contemporary notions of obedience. Interestingly, his construction not only exposes the seams in Henry's kingship, but causes Henry to rewrite his own textual body along the lines of Richard II's monolithic conception of power. At the end of her chapter, "The Two Versions of *Henry V*," Annabel Patterson asks:

Is Williams, then, another repository of the popular voice, a common man whose relation to Shakespeare is uncommonly close, and who therefore competes for exegetical control with both the Chorus and "our bending author"? If so, two opposed (though symmetrically related) conceptions of the popular are here, in this scene of ideological density, set in fully articulate contest with each other: the national leader whose populist style has established the mandate (if not the justice) of his cause, and the un(common) critic of that cause whose intelligence prohibits a simple submission of his will to the idea of popular leadership, merely because it is in the national interest.⁶

While this lengthy citation implicates a complex argument about two texts (quarto and folio) which constitute two substantially different versions of *Henry V*, her answer about Williams' role suggests the important ways that a king's textual body can be read and supports my contention about the challenges to conceptions of obedience being brought by subordinates.

While it is true that Williams never hears Henry's telling speech, the audience does. And it is certainly the case that the period was ripe for discourse surrounding questions of popular support and obedience, and the nature of legitimate authority. The gap between a king's metaphysical right and his flesh and blood power has always manifested an uneasy tension in the earlier chronicle history plays, but this tension seems to be especially relevant in this period between 1599 and 1601, the time during which Shakespeare was at work on *Hamlet* and *Henry V*. It was a time, of course, of great political anxiety during which maintaining order was a prime concern. Richard Strier sees *Hamlet* as marking a turn in the "... development in Shakespeare's political thinking from a concern with the maintenance of order to a concern with corrupt and corruption-inducing authority."⁷ For him, *Lear* presents a culmination of sorts in that it advocates disobeying superior powers in the service of higher moral authority, the same radical position of the protestant polemicists such as Goodman, Buchanan, and Ponet. While I agree with the general sweep of his views, I wish to argue that *Henry V* is likewise concerned with the problematic of obedience, and furthermore, that *Henry V* presents us with equally radical challenges to conceptions of monarchial authority which mark the disintegration of theologically based notions about service to the king.

Speaking about both Elizabeth's deteriorating physical condition and the Essex rebellion, Leonard Tennenhouse says that in this

period "people could obviously imagine state authority as two separate bodies."⁸ Patterson, too, sees the two versions of *Henry V* as exploiting the tensions in the contemporary political scene and offering insight into the structure of societal questions about obedience and authority. She says that Shakespeare introduced "representational instability" into *Henry V* by "allowing the analogy between Essex and Henry to confuse the more 'natural' analogy between Henry and Elizabeth."⁹ It is true, as Tennenhouse says, speaking of Elizabethan monarchy whose legitimacy did not depend on primogeniture, that "the exercise of force alone could hardly convert the energy of the populace into a display of legitimate power. Thus a monarch's ability to convert carnivalesque activity into banqueting and procession was the sign of his entitlement to political power" (85). And, on the face of it, no monarch was more successful at this conversion process than Henry V. So, while it is true that right is not simply a function of successful rhetorical manipulation, it is also true that power can work to undermine authority. The logical conclusion must surely be that power ultimately subverts right; therefore, a king's or other superior's authority is dependent on a subordinate's willingness to accept the right of the superior. The monarch's success at "convert[ing] carnivalesque activity into banqueting and procession" is limited by the subjects' constructing that activity as benign. It is finally the case that the people must rewrite the king's power as legitimate authority. We get a taste of this revision even among the rebels in Act Two who are as happy to be caught as Henry is sad to send them to their deaths. Grey's final words provide an extraordinary affirmation of Henry's legitimacy:

Never did faithful subject more rejoice
 At the discovery of most dangerous treason
 Than I do at this hour joy o'er myself,
 Prevented from a damned enterprise.

(II. ii. 161-64)

However, it is Bates and Williams who provide us with an instance of subjects' reading the king's textual body in a way which exposes the disjunction between right and power and which thwarts the patriotic celebration promised by the Chorus. In Act Four of *Henry V*, King Henry goes among his troops disguised, the famous "touch of Harry in the night." Although both Ann Barton and Annabel Patterson have seen the ploy as a way to mock the fantasy invoked by the disguised king, a folk motif that acts out a relationship of mutual respect between king

and subjects, it is also a strategy recommended, with more bloody-minded purpose, by George Whetstone in *A Mirour for Magistrates of Cyties* (1584).¹⁰ There is no benign fantasy in Whetstone; in fact, his treatise argues for the primacy of the subservient bond between subject and governor over and against the familial bond between father and children. The idea for domestic spying seems clear enough, if problematic, for assumptions under which a king, or lesser magistrate must operate: the presentation of an authority figure is so powerful a symbol that subjects will respond only out of immediate fear and not say, or certainly even do, what they honestly think and feel. Obedience, then, construed as popular support, becomes open to question: how deep does support extend? How conscious are people of their own construction of the king's text? Will subjects, in fact, rewrite a king's power as legitimate? Paradoxically, the procedure of disguise suggests (or ought to suggest) to the king that he has no clothes and that the ones he chooses must be donned with great care. The king's public presentation—his textual body—is so powerful a force that it will indeed alter people's beliefs and change people's actions. When Henry appears, then, we get the scene of "ideological density" that Patterson suggests—a disguised king making the case for popular support and a member of the common crowd questioning the king's authority by voicing his own version of the popular.

The play seems to prepare us for a celebration of Henry's link with the common man in this scene by the immediately preceding exchange between Pistol and Henry wherein Henry is referred to as a familiar, a "bawcock, . . . heart of gold . . ." There is, however, in Pistol's initial questions a derisive, menacing tone which pits "officer" against, "base, common, popular," just the breach that Henry would like to think he has overcome. Thus, the play manages to question what would seem to be its own clear intent, that is, to manipulate the audience to accept the personal qualities of the individual, physical king, the king who has managed to bring an entire army to wage a war on foreign soil. The textual body we are meant to construct is clear: Henry must be seen as possessing legitimate authority, the metaphysical right to rule, if you will, emanating from broad popular support. But the dramatic attempt to show Henry as the "compleat monarch" who manages to combine the king's two bodies exposes the vulnerability of the king's status, and shows the old absolutist notion of kingship unraveling into a very thin tissue of text.

Now, in the dim, half-light of the false dawn preceding the Battle at Agincourt, (which manages to be both reminiscent and

prophetic of Henry VI's despairing descant on his "morning's war" [3HVI, II. v. 1-54]), Henry invokes and then subverts his own common, human link with his men. With help from subordinates Bates and Williams, the audience reads the disconnection between the king's two bodies made articulate in the textualized third body.

In the initial part of this exchange, after the disguised king reports Erpingham's bleak assessment of the situation and his fear to Bates, it is Bates who expresses some anxiety that the captain may have divulged this fear to the king. For Bates, such an expression of fear is proscribed by his subordinate power relation to the king. This gives Henry a chance to extol the person behind or below the metaphysical status of the king, and distinct from his ceremonies of state. But the promised sophistication and "heterodoxy" does not finally materialize. Instead, the scene opens up the problems inherent in obedience by showing competing textualizations of the king, the rival popular voices.

As Henry comes upon the despairing Bates and Williams, he counsels against showing fear by explaining that even though the king shares their same vulnerable humanity, such a gesture would affect the resolution of his forces:

I think the king is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human condition. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. Therefore, when he sees reason of fears, as we do, his fears, out of doubt, be of the same relish as ours are; yet in reason, no man should possess him with any appearance of fear, lest he, by showing it, should dishearten his army.

(IV. i. 101-13)

He attempts to explain that the king's humanity causes the same sort of fears that they feel, but the king has disciplined his responses for the sake of the army. However, they know perfectly well what to expect of the king's rhetoric, and they remain unconvinced of the king's own inner courage. Henry is naturally distressed with their easy assumption that the king's outward display of courage comes without conviction and expense; furthermore, their recognition that the king's projected image does not correspond with his heart must come as a startling development to a man who believes he has had great success making the king's two bodies appear seamless, as one natural one. The depth of Henry's popular support appears to

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erode here, and its relation to real obedience is seriously questioned.

The King goes on to affirm his own convictions as a soldier, attempting yet another time to link himself to common humanity: "methinks I could not die any where so contented as in the king's company, his cause being just and his quarrel honourable" (IV. i. 126-28). But now Bates and Williams presume on the king's god-like nature. They manage both to distance themselves from deciding the justice of the king's cause and yet to acquiesce in the king's campaign. Bates says: "for we know enough if we know we are the king's subjects. If his cause be wrong, our obedience to the king wipes the crime of it out of us" (IV. i. 130-33). And Williams follows with a graphic account of the consequences if the king's cause is unjust:

But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs, and arms, and heads, chopp'd off in a battle shall join together at the latter day and cry all, "We died at such a place." . . . Now if those men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the King that led them to it; who to disobey were against all proportion of subjection.

(IV. i. 134-46)

By wanting to embrace the king's metaphysical body, the subordinates betray the discontinuity in Henry's presentation. They wish to load all their moral responsibility on the king as if he were God which is, of course, understandable since it's part of the usual rhetorical display—the king as God's substitute. These subordinates, it seems, want to have the king every which way. They do not care about the king's own humanity and feelings of doubt, and at the same time they assume that his outward image bears no relation to the truth of what he might be feeling anyway. And yet, even after they have thus seriously questioned the king's integrity, they still presume on his God-like status to absolve them of any moral responsibility for their actions.

Henry takes up the most serious problem first and begins to re-educate them to be responsible for their own souls, a necessary strategy if he is to get them to respond at the level of "real" obedience.

The King is not bound to answer the particular endings of his soldiers, the father of his son, nor the master of his servant; for they purpose not their death when they purpose their services.

(IV. i. 155-58)

But they no sooner agree to Henry's lesson that "Every subject's duty is the king's; but every subject's soul is his own" (IV. i. 176-77), than they reassert their doubt about the king's veracity. They would prefer to believe Henry's unwillingness to be ransomed is merely a public statement designed "to make [them] fight cheerfully." Henry's exasperated response—"If I live to see it, I will never trust his word after" (IV. i. 195-96)—is loaded with dramatic irony which necessarily escapes Bates and Williams, who must perceive it without kingly advantage as mere foolishness. While the dramatic strategy here might seem to affirm Henry's ideological position, it is also the case that the king's truthfulness remains in doubt, and Henry the man has been called a fool. Henry believes that it is an easy matter to convert power to right; he does it all the time. But Henry's attempt to get subordinates to accept his moral legitimacy and to obey at this level is seriously questioned. The lesson that Henry had intended to give is, in fact, only half completed when it deteriorates into what Henry construes as an insult. Williams' reading presents the alternative: "That's a perilous shot out of an elder-gun, that a poor and a private displeasure can do against a monarch! You may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather" (IV. i. 197-201). Williams' perception that "private displeasure" cannot change the character of the monarch suggests that he will not translate Henry's actions into legitimacy.

Although Bates and Williams will fight on Henry's orders, they do so only as a response to their reading of the king's absolute authority, but disconnected from legitimacy. They respond to the king as a public image that must be obeyed, but they are not persuaded that that text reflects truth. And they only reluctantly agree that the king is not morally responsible for them. All this suggests a breach between popular support and real obedience, or at least, a concept of obedience that is not related to a fantasy about the king's possession of metaphysical legitimacy.

In Henry's following soliloquy, which Annabel Patterson points out is significantly excluded from the more patriotic quarto version of *Henry V*, he unburdens himself by rewriting his role as the monolithic absolutist seemingly unconscious of the part that private men must play in his kingship:

Upon the King! let us our lives, our souls,
 Our debts, our careful wives,
 Our children, and our sins lay on the King?
 We must bear all. O hard condition,
 Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
 Of every fool whose sense no more can feel

But his own wringing! What infinite heart's ease
 Must kings neglect that private men enjoy!
 And what have kings that privates have not too,
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?

(IV. i. 230-39)

What is odd about this soliloquy on ceremony is that Henry seems to have just discovered this ceremonial distinction which sets him apart from other men. It is a text, after all, of his own making. And what he comes up against is his own inability to command obedience; that is, he discovers the impossibility of forcing subjects into converting his power to popular support. They may "obey," but they cannot feel obedience in their hearts, and they will not acquiesce in Henry's moral legitimacy. Even as Henry bemoans the truth that his subjects cannot appreciate that "The king is but a man," he begins to rewrite himself as kingly cipher devoid of humanity. Indeed, they are cynical about the discipline required to subordinate one's human responses to the kingly role, if discipline is what it is. Surely we know, if Bates and Williams do not, that they are not really a part of the "country's peace" that Henry has the audacity to believe he maintains for them.

As he continues the soliloquy he refigures his relationship to his subjects and soldiers as King to peasant and slave. No longer is Henry speaking about English brothers but the "wretched slave" with a "body fill'd and vacant mind." This semantic slide which moves from seeing a popular link of mutual respect between him and his subjects to one characterized by derision implicates Henry in a kind of absolutism that closes off the possibility for real obedience.

How subordinates and subjects respond to the king's text is important because their response defines the nature of obedience and the authority of the monarchy. Bates and Williams respond to the force implicated in Henry's text, but once having undressed the emperor they are unable to reclothe him with justice or truth. And since they cannot rewrite his power as legitimate, their own resistance throws questions of moral authority back on the king who must wrestle with his own tainted motives. Significantly, we see Henry at the end of this scene offering up a prayer acknowledging his family's guilt in Richard's usurpation and implicating him in the policies of power that sustain his kingship. His efforts to convince Bates and Williams that the king is linked to them by an essential humanity goes to the heart of his campaign for popular support that would ensure his legitimacy. But at the end of his argument against taking moral responsibility for the souls of his soldiers, the soliloquy Henry speaks betrays a radical

distinction between himself and his subjects that goes far beyond the fact of mere ceremony. As he rewrites his subjects as slaves, he betrays a connection with his own absolutist rhetorical presentation, much like Richard II had done, thus closing off real obedience and jeopardizing his legitimacy. His textual body is no longer mere *nomen* for him, one that he can consciously control, but an absolute reality which makes him vulnerable to those who can still see and exploit the seams in the king's textual fabric.

Central College

Notes

¹This essay benefited from presentation at the "Servants and Service" session of the Shakespeare Association of America 1993 meeting led by Tom Moisan and from his subsequent suggestions.

²All citations of the play are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

³Thomas Cartelli, *Marlowe, Shakespeare and the Economy of Theatrical Experience* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), p. 145.

⁴Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957).

⁵But even power is a text which must be "written" and read. As Michael McCannes points out in his study of Machiavelli ("Machiavelli and the Paradoxes of Deterrence," *Diacritics* 14 [1984], 12-19): "People will respond to the power textualized in discourse only as long as they believe that such an entity as power distinct from discourse really exists, and remain ignorant that the prince, being always an emperor with no clothes on, becomes powerful only when they dress him in that power" (13).

⁶Annabel Patterson, *Shakespeare and the Popular Voice* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 91.

⁷Richard Strier, "Faithful Servants: Shakespeare's Praise of Disobedience," in *The Historical Renaissance*, eds. Richard Strier and Heather Dubrow (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988), 104-133, p. 111.

⁸Leonard Tennenhouse, *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 87.

⁹Patterson, p. 86. Patterson later makes the case that "... within the political context of 1600, Williams' reproaches must have been equally applicable to both the rivals for national leadership: to Elizabeth, as it became apparent that the signs and symbols of popularity were merely signs, not genuine mandate; and to Essex, who at his arraignment, as Chamberlain reported bitterly in February 1601, delivered his defence 'with such bravery and so many words, that a man might easilie perceve that as he had ever lived popularly, so his cheife care was to leave a good opinion in the peoples minds now at parting.'"

¹⁰George Whetstone, *A Mirour For Magestrates of Cyties* (London, 1584). Whetstone has constructed his treatise as a kind of dialogue which includes a series of orations from Alexander and then a narrative of the senator's responses. In the first response section, he says, "These good Maiestrates used this pollicie, in disguised habits they entred the Taverns, common table, victuling houses,

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stewes and brothel-horbors, without controlement, they viewed the behaiours of the people, that thei might the better understand the ful of their abuses. . . ." (pp. 3-4). In the continuation of Alexander's oration to the citizens, Whetstone makes a case for privileging the state over family: "The loue we owe to our Parents, ought to be very reuerent and great, because thei gaue vs lyfe; to our brethren, naturall, because of preuytie in blood: to our frends, affectionat, because vertue or benefit is the foundation: But the loue we owe vnto our Countrey, commaundeth vs to breake all these bandes of affection, in presentyng the deerest frends, offending against the Weale-publique . . ." (p. 8).

“Defeated Joy”: Melancholy and *Eudaemonia* in *Hamlet* by Eric P. Levy

The first question which Claudius directs at Hamlet (whom the stage directions introducing the second scene of Act One describe as “dressed in black”) concerns his conspicuous “grief” or “sorrow”: “How is it that the clouds still hang on you?”¹ Claudius assumes that the proximate cause of Hamlet’s “woe” (I. ii. 107) is the death of his father: “What it should be, / More than his father’s death, that thus hath put him / So much from th’understanding of himself / I cannot dream of” (II. ii. 7-10). But Hamlet himself is much less certain about the cause of his sadness (“I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth” [II. ii. 295-96] and much more anxious about its possible effects: “the devil hath power / T’assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps, / Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me” [II. ii. 597-99]).

Critics have devised many explications of Hamlet’s melancholy. The most recurrent explanations entail applications of (a) Freudian theory (inspired by Freud’s seminal essay, “Mourning and Melancholia”, 1915) and (b) the Renaissance theory of the humours.² Both these approaches regard melancholy in *causal* terms as a psychological or physiological condition resulting from definite and detectable factors. Underlying this tendency to reduce melancholy to its precipitating factors is the assumption, well exemplified by States, that the condition is strictly *local* in nature, not generic, and must be *pejoratively* construed as a “dysfunction” to be treated or, at least, recognized: “There are two ways of thinking about melancholy—as a character trait and as a state of mind.”³

But a third mode of explication remains—one which interprets Hamlet’s melancholy in terms not merely of individual affliction or disorder, but of *eudaemonia* or the classical idea of happiness. As we shall see, Hamlet’s pain is eventually linked with a distinctly tragic doctrine of *eudaemonia* according to which unhappiness or *dysdaemonia* can fulfill a purpose higher than *eudaemonia*. In this regard, the play explores a supervenient “philosophy” (I. v. 175) of the role and function of pain in life.

The first step in this analysis is to explicate the classical notion of *eudaemonia*. Here, according to Windelband, the concern is “to

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show in what man's *true happiness* consists, how man must be constituted and how he must act in order to attain this with certainty . . ." (original emphasis).⁴ In this context, "happiness" (II. ii. 209) is not merely a state but the ultimate goal or *telos* of life. It ultimately entails the question, superbly formulated by Matthew Arnold, of "[h]ow to live," how to apply "ideas to life," so that life is not "abandoned to passion or allowed to drift at hazard."⁵ It is the question, resoundingly posed in Plato's *Gorgias* (512e), of what is the best life—the intrinsically noble life: "in what way can one best live the life that is to be his."⁶ On this level, life is not merely lived, but *chosen*. Conversely, as Ross indicates, happiness is that which "by itself makes life worthy of being chosen."⁷ As such, happiness presupposes an interpretation concerning (a) the purpose of life and (b) the personal discipline required to fulfill it.

In the classical doctrine of *eudaemonia*, the purpose *par excellence* enabling happiness is actualization of the highest faculties or "operant powers" (III. ii. 169) of one's own "humanity" (III. ii. 35). On this level, happiness must be construed, as Copleston indicates, "in relation to human nature as such."⁸ Windelband explicates (with reference to Aristotle): "Every being . . . becomes happy by the unfolding of his own nature and of his peculiar activity—*man*, therefore, through *reason*" (original emphasis).⁹ Hammond elaborates: "As the actuality of the eye is a seeing organ, so the actuality of the individual man is an intelligent and moral being."¹⁰ But the habitude or tendency to act in accordance with the unfolding of one's own nature and thereby achieve true happiness is not involuntary or innate. It must be directed by *virtue*, which Aristotle defines, in Ross' reformulation, as "a disposition developed out of a capacity by the *proper* exercise of that capacity" (my emphasis).¹¹ Thus construed as the ethical end, *eudaemonia* or happiness entails not merely virtue but, as Copleston explicates, "activity *according to virtue*" (my emphasis): that is, activity involving the *appropriate* use of an aptitude or capacity.¹² As such, as Windelband observes, virtue "develops out of the endowments of [man's] natural disposition, and has for its fruit, satisfaction, pleasure."¹³

The distinction between the right and wrong use of a capacity or function is crucial to the notion of happiness in this context. For, as Jaeger indicates, Plato in the *Republic* (618b) warns that "[t]he greatest danger for each of us is that he may choose the wrong life—or . . . the wrong pattern of life, *the wrong ideal*" (my emphasis).¹⁴ The Ghost identifies Claudius as having made just such a choice wrongly to exploit his rational endowments or

"wit" (whose proper exercise would, according to the eudaemonistic theory, lead to ethical happiness): "With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts—/ O wicked wit, and gifts that have the power / So to seduce!" (I. v. 43-45). Ultimately, Claudius' "wicked" use of his own mental gifts seduces, not merely Gertrude, but himself; for through their employment he is brought, not to happiness, but to moral conflict ("like a man to double business bound" [III. iii. 41]) and ultimately despair: "It is too late" (V. ii. 296).

The visitation of the Ghost also foregrounds the possibility that Hamlet might similarly choose to employ his mental "capability" (IV. iv. 36) wrongly, and thereby compromise his own fitness to achieve happiness or *eudaemonia* (understood as the proper exercise of his sovereign endowment: "reason" [I. v. 73]). To begin with, the place to which the "apparition" (I. i. 31) might "tempt" Hamlet is deemed evocative of both "madness" and "desperation" (I. v. 69, 74, 75). But the Ghost foregrounds the problem regarding appropriate exercise of reason in a more profound way. For receipt of the revenge imperative launches Hamlet on a dramatically ambivalent "course of thought" (III. iii. 83) concerning the proper exercise of his own thinking. Emphasis on the improvisatory resourcefulness of thinking conflicts with equally pronounced emphasis on unwavering fixation of thought.

Brief elaboration will clarify this dichotomy. Immediately after his colloquy with the Ghost, Hamlet affirms obedience to the revenge imperative by vowing, not action, but mental purgation and concentration: "And thy commandment all alone shall live / Within the book and memory of my brain, / Unmix'd with baser matter" (I. v. 102-04). He reaffirms this commitment while awaiting transport to England: "O, from this time forth / My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth" (IV. iv. 65-66). In contrast, in the "To be" soliloquy, he reprehends the inhibiting effect of "the pale cast of thought" (III. i. 85). Moreover, when telling Horatio of his improvisation on the ship bound "[f]or England" (IV. iii. 46), Hamlet emphasizes the importance, not of unwaveringly focussed thinking, but of unpremeditated spontaneity: "Rashly—/ And prais'd be rashness for it . . ." (V. ii. 6-7). Earlier, in Gertrude's closet, Hamlet celebrates the challenge of outwitting "knavery" (III. iv. 207) by exploiting the very devices unexpectedly deployed against him: "For 'tis the sport to have the enginer / Hoist with his own petard" (III. iv. 208-209). Thus, one attitude toward the proper exercise of reason stresses spontaneous response to events "i'th'world" (IV. v. 5); the other demands sustained concentration on ideas "in the mind" (III. i. 57).

As *eudaemonia* presupposes proper exercise of the rational faculty, the conflict in Hamlet between opponent attitudes regarding the appropriate use of reason deepens the implications of his melancholy. For Hamlet now appears as the character who is not only without his former "mirth" (II. ii. 296), but who has also forfeited the *means* of achieving true happiness. If to be happy is to exercise thought appropriately, incompatible assumptions concerning the role of thinking assure that Hamlet will remain eudaemonistically challenged. In this context, his "grief" (I. ii. 94) ultimately signifies the inability to think properly. The coexistence in Hamlet of antithetical judgments regarding the appropriate exercise of reason is a striking yet overlooked feature of his character—and one which ironizes his assumed madness: "My wit's diseased" (III. ii. 313). Indeed, Hamlet even construes his own delay in terms of contradictory cognitive operations: either "thinking too precisely" (IV. iv. 41) or not thinking at all ("bestial oblivion" [IV. iv. 40]). These alternatives recapitulate in variant form those which he associates with the task of revenge: immutable fixation on isolated idea vs. unpremeditated adjustment to emergent circumstance. Since contradictory assessments concerning the proper operation of reason are such a prominent aspect of Hamlet, investigation of both their origin and resolution will enrich our understanding of perhaps the most celebratedly enigmatic character in literature.

Hamlet's antithetical pronouncements on the proper exercise of reason reflect—and to some extent epitomize—the great antipodes of Renaissance moral doctrine: Stoicism and opportunism. Emphasis on the unvarying focus of thought, regardless of external circumstance, corresponds ultimately, as we shall confirm, to the relentless Stoic emphasis on rationality—what Starr refers to as "ever-greater concentration on the mind alone."¹⁵ Emphasis on improvisatory cunning in responding to circumstance corresponds to the political opportunism, notorious in the Renaissance, through which, according to its greatest exponent, Machiavelli, the agent must become "half-man and half-beast," with the latter fraction informed by the stealthy predation of "the lion and the fox."¹⁶ To associate *Hamlet* with opportunism and Stoicism is, of course, not a new direction in Shakespearean criticism. But showing how the collision, in the play, of these opponent trends in "the very age and body of the time" (III. ii. 22-24) underpins Hamlet's achievement of tragic *eudaemonia* will enable us to foreground a crucial dimension of his character. Our study, however, will not be genealogical. For our concern is not to repeat the exercise of tracing the transmission of ideas to either

the Renaissance in general or to Shakespeare in particular, but instead to explore the implications of the manifest collision of these ideas both in the world of the play and in Hamlet's own mind.

Analysis can proceed by first reviewing the Stoic ideas cited in the play and then explicating their subversion and supersession.¹⁷ After that, we shall consider the conflict with opportunism. The most obvious references to Stoicism include (a) the mention of "Seneca" (II. ii. 396), the Stoic mentor of Nero whom that emperor eventually forced to commit suicide and (b) Horatio's allusion, when attempting to drink poison, to the Stoic approval of suicide: "I am more antique Roman than a Dane" (V. ii. 346). But the most succinctly comprehensive reference to Stoicism occurs in Hamlet's praise of Horatio: "for thou hast been / As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers nothing" / A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards / Hast ta'en with equal thanks" (III. ii. 65-68). Here the defining Stoic values of *apatheia* (absence of emotions), *ataraxy* (imperturbability), and *autarky* (self-sufficiency) are compressed epigrammatically. Explanation of these values requires clarification of the Stoic notion of *eudaemonia*.

In the classical tradition to which we earlier referred, *eudaemonia* or true happiness must be self-sufficient and teleological (that is, the ultimate end of action). As such, it cannot be subject to the vagaries of "fate" (I. iv. 82), "chance" (IV. vii. 160), "circumstance" (III. iii. 83), or "occasion" (II. ii. 16). Moreover, it cannot be affected by the immediate emotion or "passion" (II. ii. 555) aroused by "events" (I. i. 124). In a benign environment (such as that conceived by Aristotle), *eudaemonia* entails the positive fulfillment of intrinsic and individual capacity. But in an unpredictable or hostile environment, *eudaemonia* pertains more to maintenance of emotional equilibrium and elimination of disturbance than to perfection of operation. Hence, the cardinal Stoic principle concerns resignation to unalterable necessity or fate and elimination of the emotional reactions which external factors provoke: "Give me that man / That is not passion's slave . . ." (III. ii. 71-72). Armstrong and Markus elaborate: "The Stoic ideal is that of identification with the natural law, in such a way that the course of human life in accordance with the necessity of law is accepted with detachment."¹⁸ In this context, *eudaemonia* entails enclosure in the rationally ordered mind which outside influence cannot agitate. Zeller corroborates: "happiness is made to consist in the exaltation of the mind above all external objects, in the withdrawal of man within his own thinking self."¹⁹

Hence, Stoicism conceives the relation between self and world in terms of "seige" (IV. vii. 74) warfare. To maintain equilibrium,

the individual must, as Rohde notes, "arm himself against all that is not himself, that is outside the region of his free will and choice . . . [and] trust to the self-conscious strength of his own intelligence."²⁰ Marcus Aurelius provides the classic enunciation of this defensive posture: "the Mind, unmastered by passions, is a very citadel, for a man has no fortress more impregnable wherein to find refuge and be untaken forever."²¹ The Stoic stress on the mind as a bastion of resistance against the emotionally disturbing impingements of the external world is clearly enunciated in *Hamlet*. Rosenkrantz offers one formulation: "[t]he single and peculiar life is bound / With all the strength and armour of the mind / To keep itself from noyance" (III. iii. 11-13). Hamlet's reference to "the pales and forts of reason" (I. iv. 28) is another. The siege imagery in his great "To be" soliloquy offers a third: "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer / The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" (III. i. 57-58). In fact, in the context of the Aurelius' Stoic conception of the mind as a "citadel" or "fortress" constructed to be "fortified" (I. i. 35) against the assaults of emotion aroused by circumstance, the opening setting of the play—the battlemented "platform" (I. ii. 214) of Elsinore castle—gains deeper significance. For here we have a reification of the Stoic mind, defended by "the pales and forts of reason" (I. iv. 28). Yet, despite the extreme vigilance of the "watchman" (I. iii. 46) and his aides, overmastering emotion intrudes, excited by the Ghost who himself, according to Hamlet, is troubled by perturbation: "Rest, rest, perturbed spirit" (I. v. 190).

The Stoic notion of reliance on the mind for tranquility is problematized by Hamlet, even though he himself cites it. For to Hamlet the mind is defenseless against itself, and withdrawal into rationality substitutes an internal threat for an external one: "O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space—were it not that I have bad dreams" (II. ii. 254-56). In the "To be" soliloquy, "the mind" seeks refuge from "troubles" by means of the ultimate withdrawal, suicide, but with similarly disturbing results: "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come" (III. i. 57, 59, 66). Here, more emphatically than anywhere else in the play, the Stoic doctrine of the self-sufficiency (*autarky*) of mind is overturned.²² Moreover, the prevalence of madness—both real and feigned—in the play further suggests the vulnerability of the mind to its own mental processes. As the example of Ophelia shows, the mind can be "driven into desp'rate terms" (IV. vii. 26) simply through enclosure in its own "course of thought" (III. iii. 83). Claudius makes a similar observation regarding Hamlet ("Whereon his brains still beating puts him

thus / From fashion of himself"—III. i. 176-77), as does the Ghost concerning Gertrude: "O step between her and her fighting soul. / Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works" (III. iv. 113-14).

Thus the Stoic belief that, in Jaspers' formulation, "we are indeed master of our own thoughts" is problematized in *Hamlet*.²³ But as with the Stoic insistence on *elimination* of emotion, "[i]n equal scale" (I. ii. 13), so the hyperbolic *display* of emotion demanded by the "terms of honour" (V. ii. 242) dominant in the world of the play is also subjected to a dramatic critique. Hamlet's self-castigating comparison of his own reticence to the player's penchant for exaggerated expression of feeling typifies the emphasis on theatrical expression of emotion: "What would he do / Had he the motive and the cue for passion / That I have?" (II. ii. 554-56). Yet, as the confrontation with Laertes in Ophelia's grave indicates, Hamlet eventually repudiates the "custom" of exaggerated emotional display: "Nay, and thou'lt mouth, / I'll rant as well as thou" (I. iv. 15; V. i. 278-79). The defects in the Stoic and theatrical moralities competing in the play can be compactly summarized: the first encourages the denial of emotion that *is* felt; the second encourages dramatic expression of emotion that *is not* sincerely felt.

The detecting of Claudius' guilt by means of *The Murder of Gonzago* involves a striking conflation of these contraries. To begin with, Horatio's role as back-up witness of Claudius' affective response during the theatrical performance is highly ironic; for, as a Stoic, Horatio dismisses the relevance of emotion. In contrast, the players performing the play deliberately *simulate* emotion. Like Horatio who, according to Hamlet, "suffers nothing" (III. ii. 66), the Player, whose recitation is so emotive that he himself appears moved by it ("Look whe'er he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes"—II. ii. 515-16), also suffers nothing: "And all *for nothing!*" (II. ii. 551—my emphasis). But in one case, suffering nothing pertains to the quelling of emotion, while in the other it refers to the imitation of emotion. Claudius himself, the figure whose emotions in this scene are the compelling object of Hamlet and Horatio's attention, grotesquely fuses both alternatives. On the one hand, his oxymoronic balancing of emotional contraries ("Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, / With an auspicious and a dropping eye, / With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage, In *equal scale* weighing delight and dole" (I. ii. 10-13—my emphasis) travesties Horatio's emotional equilibrium: "A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards / Hast ta'en with *equal thanks*" (III. ii. 67-68—my emphasis). On the other hand, his very presence at the play, undertaken in a false show of

solicitude for Hamlet, whose father he murdered, is itself an example of the simulation of emotion—the tactic professionally employed by the players whose performance he watches.

The relentless critique of both (a) the Stoic devaluation of emotion and (b) the theatrical overvaluation of emotion, “[w]hen honour’s at the stake” (IV. iv. 56), leads to a reinterpretation of the relation between emotion (in this context, construed as painful feeling) and *eudaemonia*. For in *Hamlet*, pain is not merely an affliction to be endured (as with Stoicism) or hyperbolically flourished (as stipulated by the “terms of honour”). Consider, for example, the Ghost’s combustive suffering in Purgatory, where he is allegedly doomed to remain “Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purg’d away” (I. v. 12-13). In this instance, pain is, not morally irrelevant, but ultimately redemptive. In other ways too the Ghost foregrounds the relevance of pain to human experience so vividly that he almost *reifies* the reality of feeling. As a nocturnal “apparition” (I. i. 31) on the lonely “platform” (I. ii. 214), the Ghost is perceived, not only visually, but also *emotively* in terms of the overwhelming feelings he both evokes (“whilst they, distill’d / Almost to jelly with the act of fear”—I. ii. 204-205) and expresses: “O horrible! O horrible! most horrible! (I. v. 80).

The overwhelming immediacy of emotion—as opposed to its refusal or simulation—in the world of the play corresponds to Whitehead’s celebrated dictum: “The basis of experience is emotional. Stated more generally, the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given.”²⁴ But in the tragic environment of *Hamlet*, where “[w]hen sorrows come, they come not single spies, / But in battalions” (IV. v. 78-79), emotion is not merely the “basis of experience,” as Whitehead indicates. Instead, it threatens to *inundate* experience. Additional examples include (a) Hamlet’s visit to Ophelia’s closet (“He rais’d a sigh so piteous and profound / As it did seem to shatter all his bulk / And end his being”—II. i. 94-96), (b) the “sea of troubles” in the “To be” soliloquy (III. i. 59), (c) Gertrude’s moral agony in her closet (“These words like daggers enter in my ears” (III. iv. 95), (d) Hamlet’s reaction on seeing the Ghost in Gertrude’s closet (“Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep”—III. iv. 119), and (e) Ophelia’s madness resulting from “the poison of deep grief” (IV. v. 75).

In *Hamlet*, there is no escape from emotional pain. But the very inevitability of pain alters its meaning. According to the “To be” soliloquy, the only purpose of life is to escape, by means of suicide, the pain “[t]hat flesh is heir to” (III. i. 63). But in his dying moments near the end of the play, Hamlet prevents Horatio from

accomplishing precisely this goal: "Absent thee from *felicity* awhile, / And in this harsh world draw thy breath in *pain* / To tell my story" (V. ii. 352-54—my emphasis).²⁵ Here the purpose of life is neither to avoid pain nor to feign it. Instead, the purpose of life—the purpose, that is, which Horatio himself ultimately accepts for the continuation of his own life—is to clarify the meaning of the pain that has occurred, "lest more mischance / On plots and errors happen" (V. ii. 398-99). Here, explicitly, *eudaemonia* depends on *dysdaemonia*. The purpose of emotional suffering is to expose and overcome its cause—if not in oneself, at least for others, and if not now, at least in the future, when "[a]ll may be well" (III. iii. 72) as a result. This is the ultimate answer to the question which Hamlet posed to the Ghost: "What should we do?" (I. iv. 57). Unlike Stoicism where the purpose of individual life is to "keep itself from noyance" (III. iii. 13) by dismissing emotion, here the purpose of individual life is to suffer "noyance" in order that the destructive emotions of others might be rendered less disturbing. In this context, the purpose of pain is to enable others to achieve its catharsis.

The altruism implicit in this attitude contrasts vividly with the opportunism rampant in the world of the play. Hamlet himself is at once its impassioned critic and exponent. As exponent of opportunism, he exploits his own melancholy as an opportunity to use madness as a disguise, and worries that the Ghost might exploit that same melancholy for his own purposes: "and perhaps, / Out of my weakness and my melancholy, / As he is very potent with such spirits, / Abuses me to damn me" (II. ii. 596-99). Moreover, in his assumed madness, Hamlet refers cryptically to his opportunism: "When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw" (II. ii. 374-75)—that is, when it is opportune to do so. In addition, he adroitly seizes the opportunity offered by the arrival of the players: "The play's the thing / Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King" (II. ii. 600-01). Regarding revenge, Hamlet assumes that action should be encouraged by circumstance: "How all *occasions* do inform against me, / And spur my dull revenge" (IV. iv. 32-33—my emphasis). Ironically, this very emphasis on opportunity contributes to his notorious delay; for when presented with an inviting opportunity to kill Claudius at prayer ("Now might I do it pat" [III. iii. 72]), Hamlet decides to defer action to a more favorable occasion, when his victim is "about some act / That has no relish of relish of salvation in't" (III. iii. 91-92).

Yet, however adeptly Hamlet adopts the tactics of opportunism, he is also their most vehement critic. In the "nunnery" dialogue,

he impugns a sexually opportunistic world: ("We are arrant knaves all, believe none of us" [III. i. 129-30]), a judgment echoed by Ophelia in her madness: "Young men will do't if they come to't" (IV. v. 60). When instructing the players, Hamlet deplors the opportunism of actor-clowns trying to induce "barren spectators" (III. ii. 41) to laugh by laughing too: "That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it" (III. ii. 43-45). Moreover, Hamlet explicitly praises Horatio for his *lack* of opportunism: "For what advancement may I hope from thee / That no revenue hast but thy good spirits / To feed and clothe thee?" (III. ii. 57-59).

Other characters embrace opportunism. Claudius exploits circumstance when poisoning the sleeping King during his "secure hour" (I. v. 61), and when plotting to offer Hamlet a drink laced with poison during the impending duel: "When in your motion you are hot and dry" (IV. vii. 156). Polonius boasts about his ability to exploit opportunity: "If *circumstances* lead me, I will find / Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed / Within the centre" (II. ii. 157-59—my emphasis). Moreover, he exploits the circumstance of Hamlet's solitary strolls ("You know sometimes walks four hours together / Here in the lobby" [II. ii. 160-61]) in order to "contrive" a "meeting" between Hamlet and Ophelia: "At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him" (II. ii. 212, 163). Claudius suspects Fortinbras of opportunism in preparing to exploit the recent transfer of power in Denmark: "Collegued with this *dream of his advantage*" (I. ii. 21—my emphasis). Indeed, on the deaths of Claudius and Hamlet, Fortinbras opportunistically claims the throne: "I have some rights of memory in this kingdom, / Which now to claim my vantage [i.e. favorable opportunity] doth invite me" (V. ii. 394-95). Even the Ghost is opportunistic in the sense of having to make the most of fleeting opportunity: "My hour is almost come / When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames / Must render up myself" (I. v. 3-5).

Closer examination of the Ghost will clarify the role of opportunism in the world of the play. The Ghost's opportunism is paradoxically necessitated by implication in divine design: he must speak *now*, lest communication be prevented by compulsory return to purgation. In contrast, the opportunism of other characters not only obscures awareness of encompassing design, but generates a pattern of events that aggravates the tendency to think opportunistically, without considering the long-range consequences. Ironically, as Hamlet's apology for the opportunistic (but erroneous) murder of Polonius suggests, the "*arrows of outrageous fortune*" (III. i. 58—my emphasis) which seem, in the "To be" soliloquy, to reduce life to sheer endurance, are

themselves multiplied by opportunism or the tendency to regard circumstance as the means of fulfilling one's own immediate purposes: "Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil / Free me so far in your most generous thoughts / That I have shot my *arrow* o'er the house / And hurt my brother" (V. ii. 236-69—my emphasis).²⁶ In thus intensifying the outrageous fortune which all must suffer, opportunism proliferates misery.

But in the play mere passivity with respect to fortune—such as that associated with Stoicism—is not portrayed as more efficacious. For the Stoic ideals of *apatheia* and *ataraxy* (imperturbability) in the midst of disaster are parodied by the mad Ophelia who drowns serenely, "incapable of her distress" (IV. vii. 177). The implications of this opposition between Stoicism and opportunism can be preliminarily clarified by elaboration of the view of fortune pertaining to each. According to Stoicism, happiness or *eudaemonia* requires emotionless acceptance of circumstance over which the individual has no final control. Aurelius elaborates: "Whatever befalls thee was set in train for thee from everlasting, and the interplication of causes was from eternity weaving into one fabric thy existence and the coincidence of the event."²⁷ But according to opportunism, happiness or *eudaemonia* results from the deft exploitation of circumstance. Whereas in Stoicism, as Armstrong and Markus indicate, fate is imperious and "[m]an has no choice but to obey," to Machiavelli—whose masterpiece, *The Prince* (1513), is the most celebrated Renaissance document regarding opportunism—the individual can, through resolute and unhesitating initiative, turn fate to his own advantage.²⁸ Ernst Cassirer explains: "For Machiavelli, Fortune rules over half of all human actions. But she gives herself to him who acts, to him who quickly and boldly grasps her, and not to the passive observer."²⁹

The conflict between these opponent interpretations of fortune is emphasized by *The Murder of Gonzago*. On the one hand, the impromptu staging of that play exemplifies shrewd opportunism. Hamlet employs the players, recently arrived at Elsinore, as an improvised Trojan horse: they are admitted into the defended castle where their performance will ultimately threaten the security of the unsuspecting King. Indeed, on greeting the players, Hamlet recites a "speech" concerning the "*ominous horse*" at Troy (II. ii. 430, 450). But on the other hand, the play which he instructs them to perform foregrounds the fragility of human "enterprises" (III. i. 86). The Player King insists that the individual can guarantee neither (a) the eventual execution of a given "project" ("But what we do determine, oft we break" [IV. vii. 151, III. ii. 182]) nor (b) its ultimate effects if actually

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accomplished: "Our wills and fates do so *contrary run* / That our devices still are overthrown: / Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own" (III. ii. 206-208—my emphasis).

The disjunction between Stoicism and opportunism—acceptance of universal scheme or exploitation of immediate circumstance—achieves "reconciliation" (V. ii. 243) in the notion of the drama, *Hamlet*, as subsuming design unfolded through the singular actions of character. Just as, on discovering the assassination plot against him, Hamlet feels momentarily trapped in a "play" conceived and "begun" (V. ii. 31) by others, so as result of foiling that plot through his own spontaneous resourcefulness, he views each individual life as guided by purposes that exceed its comprehension: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will" (V. ii. 10-11). Unlike Claudius who, while watching *The Murder of Gonzago*, has the option of halting proceedings when the "play" in which he is implicated menaces him, Hamlet must rely on his own resourcefulness, and spontaneously rewrite the treacherous plot *in medias res*: "I sat me down, / Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair" (V. ii. 31-32). Yet, in thus counting on his own improvisation, Hamlet is acutely aware of a higher power directing his destiny. Hence, the notion of "play" or drama not only becomes a metaphor for the encompassing design of end-shaping divinity, but also underscores Hamlet's own status as the eponymous hero of the tragedy concerning him. As a character he appears in a play where his actions achieve their full significance only in terms of the larger design of the whole. But that design can manifest itself only through the actions of the particular characters it involves—just as, in Hamlet's own view, the end-shaping purposes of divinity are made manifest through the independent initiative of the individuals they conserve.³⁰

Hamlet's progress from melancholy to *eudaemonia* can now be epitomized. In his melancholy, Hamlet can only lament painful circumstance which has destroyed his former "mirth": "It is not nor it cannot come to good" (II. ii. 296; I. ii. 159). But in achieving *eudaemonia*, Hamlet exploits painful circumstance as an opportunity to clarify the proper relation of the individual to circumstance—one that is neither entirely passive (as with Stoicism) nor entirely manipulative (as with opportunism). This interpretation can explain the eudaimonistic contradiction connected with Hamlet's death. On the one hand, Hamlet achieves serene "readiness" to meet his end, "[i]n happy time," "[n]ow or whensoever" (V. ii. 218, 201, 199). But on the other hand, he dies with a broken heart: "Now cracks a noble heart" (V. ii. 364). In so far as Hamlet is concerned with his own pain regarding

the "wounded name" which he risks leaving behind, death seems premature and contrary to the fulfillment which constitutes *eudaemonia* (V. ii. 349). For this reason, as we have seen, with his dying strength Hamlet wrestles the cup of poison from Horatio's grasp, and instructs him "[t]o tell my story" (V. ii. 354). Yet in so far as Hamlet recognizes that his own purposes must yield to higher ones, he reaffirms his acceptance of that which cannot be changed: "Had I but time—as this fell sergeant, Death, / Is strict in his arrest—O, I could tell you—/ But *let it be*" (V. ii. 341-43). Hence, ironically, the circumstance (namely, death) which supremely arouses Hamlet's sense of purpose becomes the opportunity to confirm his acceptance of circumstance to which individual purpose must succumb.

The University of British Columbia

Notes

¹*Hamlet*, ed. Harold Jenkins (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), I. ii. 82, 94, 92, 66. All quotations from *Hamlet* pertain to this edition, and will be indicated parenthetically in the text.

²Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Angela Richards, trans. James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964), vol. 11 of *The Pelican Freud Library*, 15 vols., 1973-86, 11. 245-68. For post-Freudian interpretations of melancholy, see (a) Ernest Jones, *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1949; New York: Norton, 1976); (b) Theodore Lidz, *Hamlet's Enemy: Madness and Myth in "Hamlet"* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 195-205; (c) Arthur Kirsch, "Hamlet's Grief," *ELH*, 48 (1981), 17-36; and (d) W. I. D. Scott, *Shakespeare's Melancholics* (Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1978). According to Scott, Hamlet is a manic-depressive (73-107). For a comprehensive examination of Freudian aspects of Shakespearean drama, see Julia Reinhard Lufton and Kenneth Reinhard, *After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1993). For a bibliography of opinions relating Hamlet to Renaissance theories of melancholy, see Arthur McGee, *The Elizabethan Hamlet* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 100-01. For the Renaissance doctrine of humours, see Bert O. States, "The Theory of Humours," *Hamlet and the Concept of Character* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992), 63-86 and John W. Draper, *The Humours and Shakespeare's Characters* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1945). For a classic analysis of Hamlet's melancholy in terms of Elizabethan notions of temperament, see A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904; London: MacMillan, 1956), pp. 120-28. For a brief bibliography of critics accepting Bradley's conclusion, see Paul N. Siegel, "'Hamlet, Revenge!': The Uses and Abuses of Historical Criticism," *Shakespeare Survey*, 45 (1993), 15-26, p. 19, n. 27. D. W. Robertson in, "A Medievalist Looks at *Hamlet*," *Essays in Medieval Culture* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), associates Hamlet's melancholy with the vice of sloth (316-22).

³States, 63.

⁴Wilhelm Windelband, *A History of Philosophy*, 2 vols., trans. James H. Tufts (1901; New York: Harper & Row, 1958), vol. 1, p. 82.

⁵For the first quotation, see Matthew Arnold, "Wordsworth," in *Victorian Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Walter E. Houghton and G. Robert Stange (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 539. For the second quotation, see Matthew Arnold, "Marcus Aurelius," in *Essays in Criticism, First Series*, in *English Prose of the Victorian Era*, ed. Charles Frederick Harrold and William D. Templeman (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1938), p. 1085.

⁶Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. W. D. Woodhead, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollingen Series LXXI (New York: Bollingen, 1961), p. 512e.

⁷Sir David Ross, *Aristotle*, 5th ed. (London: Methuen, 1949), p. 191.

⁸Frederick Copleston, S. J., *A History of Philosophy*, 9 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962), vol. 1, p. 132.

⁹Windelband, vol. 1, p. 151.

¹⁰N. G. L. Hammond, *A History of Greece to 322 B.C.*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 590. Cf. Anthony Kenny, "Cartesian Privacy," *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. George Pitcher (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 352: "Intellect is a capacity . . . and capacities are known through their exercise."

¹¹Ross, p. 194. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106a, 15-17.

¹²Copleston, vol. 2, p. 76.

¹³Windelband, vol. 1, p. 151.

¹⁴Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Highet, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943), vol. 2, p. 370.

¹⁵Chester G. Starr, *Civilization and the Caesars: The Intellectual Revolution in the Roman Empire* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 274.

¹⁶Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. James B. Atkinson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), p. 340.

¹⁷For a standard account of Stoic attitudes in *Hamlet*, see Herschel Baker, *The Image of Man: A Study of the Idea of Human Dignity in Classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance* (New York: Harper, 1947), p. 302. For more recent evaluations, see A. D. Nuttall, "Hamlet: Conversations with the Dead," in *The Stoic in Love: Selected Essays on Literature and Ideas* (Savage, Md.: Barnes & Noble, 1990), pp. 27-40; Mark Matheson, "Hamlet and 'A Matter Tender and Dangerous,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 46 (1995), 383-97; and Gordon Hartford, "Stoicism in Shakespeare," *English Studies in Africa*, 36 (1993), 1-15.

¹⁸A. H. Armstrong and R. A. Markus, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960), p. 101.

¹⁹E. Zeller, *Stoics, Epicureans and Skeptics*, trans. Oswald J. Reichel (1879; New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 514.

²⁰Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks*, 8th ed., trans. W. B. Hillis (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1920), p. 545.

²¹Marcus Aurelius, *The Communings with Himself of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Emperor of Rome*, trans. C. R. Haines (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1961), viii, 48.

²²On autarky, see also P. Merlan, "Greek Philosophy From Plato to Plotinus," *The Cambridge History of Later Greek & Early Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 125. Cf. Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity: A.D. 150-750* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1971), p. 51: "the individual had a growing sense of possessing something in himself that was infinitely valuable and yet painfully unrelated to the outside world."

²³Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 91.

²⁴Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1933), p. 226.

²⁵For problems in Horatio's ensuing account, see Michael Goldman, *Acting and Action in Shakespearean Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985), p. 28 and David Thatcher, "Horatio's 'Let me speak': Narrative Summary and Summary Narrative in *Hamlet*," *English Studies*, 74 (1993), p. 256.

²⁶According to Roy Battenhouse, *Shakespeare's Christian Dimension: An Anthology of Commentary* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1994), Hamlet's "metaphor of a misdirected arrow is that of *hamartia*, the term used by Aristotle to describe tragic error and used in the New Testament to designate sin" p. 382. But in the context of the effort to avenge, a much more likely source for the arrow metaphor is Herodotus' account of how Darius, after hearing of the destruction of Sardis by the Athenians in 498 B.C., "called for his bow . . . set an arrow on the string, shot it up into the air and cried, 'Grant, O God, that I may punish the Athenians.'" See Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. Aubrey de Selincourt, rev. by John Marincola (London: Penguin, 1972) V. 105.

²⁷Aurelius, x. 5.

²⁸Armstrong and Markus, p. 100.

²⁹Ernst Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. Mario Domandi (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), p. 77. Also see (a) Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1988), p. 311; (b) Gene A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: Univ. California Press, 1969), pp. 279-80; (c) Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1946), pp. 160-61. John Alvis, "Introductory: Shakespearean Poetry and Politics," *Shakespeare as Political Thinker*, ed. John Alvis and Thomas G. West (Durham, N.C.: Carolina Academic Press, 1981), notes that there are three references to Machiavelli in Shakespeare's plays (p. 8). For an older account of the influence of Machiavelli on Elizabethan drama, see Wyndham Lewis, *The Lion and the Fox: The Role of the Hero in the Plays of Shakespeare* (New York, Harper, 1955), pp. 64-68. For more recent studies, see Geoffrey Wilson, "Renaissance Machiavellism and the Subject of Psychoanalysis," *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought: A Quarterly of Integrative and Interdisciplinary Studies*, 18 (1995), pp. 559-603 and Katherine Eisaman Maus, "Machiavels and Family Men," *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 35-71. For further bibliography, see Maus, p. 35, n. 1.

³⁰Regarding the conjunction of fate and freedom, inevitability and initiative, compare (a) Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 256: "self-realization . . . is simultaneously freedom and destiny"; and (b) Sir Herbert Grierson, *Cross Currents in English Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (1929; Baltimore: Penguin, 1966), p. 98: "In tragedy . . . there are always two protagonists—the hero of the play . . . and on the other hand the divine, inscrutable power which controls man's destiny" (paraphrasing Jan Te Winkel). Critical controversy regarding the role of Providence in *Hamlet* is typified by the respective positions of (a) Robertson (see note 2) and (b) Harry Keyishian, *The Shapes of Revenge: Victimization, Vengeance, and Vindictiveness in Shakespeare* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995). According to Robertson, Heaven directs the affairs of Denmark by passively permitting malicious characters—including *Hamlet*—to effect their own "destruction" (p. 331). According to Keyishian, the "closure" of the play has required "an act of God" (p. 67). In contrast to Robertson, J. W. Lever, *The Tragedy of State* (London: Methuen, 1971), treats the problem of blame in the context of society, not character: "in Jacobean tragedy it is not primarily the conduct of the individual, but of the society which assails him, that stands condemned" (p. 12).

Macduff's Dilemma: Anticipation of Existentialist Ethics in *Macbeth* by John F. Hennedy

Does the range of Macduff-labeling from epitomizer of "integrity"¹ to "archvillain"² merely confirm suspicions that some Shakespearean criticism, like other literary commentary in recent decades, has completely lost its bearings? To proceed more positively, I should note that an essay accompanying a recent *Macbeth* edition cogently explains why issues raised by Macduff's leaving his family unprotected while journeying to England constitute some of the "provocative questions" and "moral ambiguities" perceived by newer critics as complicating traditional "natural" versus "unnatural" interpretations of *Macbeth*.³ My own initial purpose is to show that Shakespeare encourages these divergent reactions to Macduff—especially to his decision to seek aid for Malcolm's cause in England while leaving his family in Scotland—by the manner in which the playwright dramatizes circumstances relating to this choice. Then, risking understandable charges of anachronism, I shall cite a pertinent Sartrean explanation of existentialist ethical choice to support my contention that Shakespeare purposely creates the moral ambiguity of Macduff's options to depict one facet of Scotland's astonishing degeneration brought on by Macbeth's escalating ruthlessness.

A close scrutiny of relevant details of the play will disclose those elements that have encouraged the rich variety of response displayed toward Macduff over the last few decades.⁴ The first reference to Macduff's purpose in traveling to England, for example, seems to place this journey in a decidedly positive perspective: the anonymous Lord responding to Lennox's inquiries in III. vi informs him (and us) that Macduff goes to England to seek political support from the "holy king," Edward the Confessor, who would then enlist English nobles, Northumberland and Siward, for Malcolm's cause; this well-informed Lord also states that Macduff will be seeking the aid of "Him above" (32) so that

we [the Scottish] may again
Give to our table meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives. . . .
(III. vi. 33-35)⁵

The powerful rhetoric of these lines portrays Macduff's English

mission not only as divinely sanctioned, but also as potentially restoring to England the expected health-giving results of sleeping and eating. Since Shakespeare has conveyed the disorder of Macbeth's rule by dramatizing disruptions in sleeping (see II. ii. 39) as well as in eating—as when Banquo's ghost, sliced up by the assassins' "bloody knives," abruptly halts the banquet—the initial connotations of Macduff's goals in journeying from his family could hardly be portrayed more affirmatively.

Yet, the impression most get from the circumstances preceding the murders in IV. ii is markedly dissimilar. Departing from his Holinshed source in providing the perspective of Macduff's abandoned wife, Shakespeare casts grave doubts on any justification for her husband's departure.⁶ Despite Ross's attempt to sanction Macduff's actions on the grounds of his friend's "noble, wise' judicious" (16) character, it is hard to imagine a production in which the performer playing Lady Macduff would not get the better of her husband's defender in this dispute. She unequivocally accuses Macduff as one who foolishly abandons his family out of fear of being a traitor. Although these charges might seem extravagant even from the minimal exposure to Macduff that the audience has so far experienced, the vulnerability of her situation could not but be universally felt. Furthermore, the moving imagery of nurture, which Shakespeare allots to her accusations, reinforces their credibility:

. . . He loves us not,
He wants the natural touch; for the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
(8-11)

The ensuing exchange with her son and his on-stage slaying, with their drastic contrast in tone, further complicate probable audience response to the absent father. The precocious, wisely "naive" responses of young Macduff to his mother's challenging questions and answers bear the marks of a typically Shakespearean exchange of wit, calculated to amuse more than to inform. Even Lady Macduff's previously damaging identification of her husband as a "traitor" loses some of its sting when their son wittily places his father's alleged motivations into the larger context of humanity's common failings (57-59).⁷ And immediately preceding the most heinous of the play's series of atrocities, the previously alienated wife courageously wills her husband's safety in her reply to the first murderer's inquiry about Macduff's location:

The Upstart Crow

I hope in no such place so unsanctified
Where such as thou mayst find him.

(82-83)

Her son's last worldly utterance, "Thou liest, thou shag-haired villain!" (84), to the assassin's unambiguous denunciation of Macduff as "traitor" provides even greater credit to its unintimidated speaker and, by extension, to the subject of his defense.

But once again, Shakespeare places before us with the complex exchanges between Macduff and Malcolm in the following scene the question of Macduff's judgment in leaving home. In Malcolm's early sparring with Macduff before the major testing, he implies the charge that keeps before the audience's consciousness the potential irresponsibility of Macduff's behavior:

Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking?

(IV. iii. 27-29)

Without providing an explanation to Malcolm, Macduff convincingly conveys a sense of self not deflated by any conscious dereliction of duty:

I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot.

(36-38)

Yet, later in the scene, when Ross finally breaks the agonizing suspense to inform Macduff of the slaughter of his wife, children, and servants, the father immediately includes guilt among the complex emotions that he displays, as represented by his first non-inquisitive response, "And I must be from thence!" (213), to Ross's unenviable revelations. A few lines later he reemphasizes his recognition of personal complicity in this catastrophe by proclaiming:

Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee! Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
Fell slaughter on their souls.

(226-29)

Thus, we have underscored passages where Shakespeare seems to endorse the goals of Macduff's mission in spite of his wife's

powerful objections to his flight. Is it any wonder that critical commentary is so divided on the issue of Macduff's virtue?

The explanation I shall suggest for the function of this problematic inconsistency lies in viewing Macduff's dilemma from the perspective of existentialist ethics. Shakespeare's portrayal of extreme evil and confusion in *Macbeth*, represented by and resulting from Macbeth's devastating ruthlessness, is consistently recognized by commentators on the play. A few have even seen the play's expressions of universal disorder and nihilistic response as a precursor to the existentialist world view of more recent times.⁸ The further step I wish to take is to consider the ethical consequences of an existentialist universe, as described by a leading proponent of this philosophy, Jean-Paul Sartre, and to apply these concepts to Macduff's dilemma.

Sartre in his essay, "Existentialism and Humanism,"⁹ establishes as the starting point of his philosophy that since no God exists, the existence of "man" (Sartre's term for humanity) precedes his essence. Since no essential human nature derives from the thoughts of a Supreme Being, each person chooses what she or he will become by the actions that each selects to perform. The absence of pre-established moral values leads constantly to dilemmas. By chance, the prime example that Sartre employs to illustrate these points bears an enlightening resemblance to Macduff's dilemma. In World War II France, a young student of Sartre was faced with the options of going off to fight with the Free French Forces in England or of remaining at home as the sole comforter of his mother, bereaved by her elder son's death in battle and alienated from a husband who was inclined toward collaboration with the Germans. For Sartre, this dilemma posed the certain results of solacing the mother based on a sympathetic ethic of personal devotion against the uncertain results of committing oneself to a "broader cause" involving public ethics. Macduff's options of devoting himself to the comfort and protection of his immediate family or to the less certain prospects of involvement in the "legitimate" Scottish public cause against the unrighteously reigning Macbeth strike me as being of the same order.

The crucial point that Sartre makes about the young student's options is that no pre-established (*a priori*) moral guidelines exist to "solve" this agonizing dilemma. Only the choosing itself, the grounds for which the student, like all of us, must freely invent, creates a morality which begins to define the meaning of the individual's existence. This tentativeness of the human condition, as Sartre sees it, does not produce despair because of the dignity to humans that necessity of choice conveys; but,

he still recognizes overwhelming feelings of "anguish" and "abandonment" that this situation fosters for those who squarely confront it. Anguish arises because all moral decisions involve the responsibility of choosing a course of action right for all humanity, not just for oneself. And we experience a sense of abandonment for the very reason that we must act without the comfort of divine guidance or the aid of any other pre-established system of values.

Shakespeare in *Macbeth* stresses similar devastating consequences when a monarch rejects legitimate moral standards to gain control and continues to pursue immoral options to retain power. We can clearly judge the immorality of Macbeth's initial decision to live up to Lady Macbeth's conception of "manhood" rather than be restrained by the just and compassionate standards which he recognizes in his famous I. vii soliloquy. Yet, in the threatening and confusing Scottish atmosphere that Macbeth creates, no such clear-cut morality obtains for Macduff who assumes fullest responsibility for curtailing these atrocities. The temporary absence of such desirable moral guidelines is for Shakespeare a chief sign of Scotland's deplorable condition. In the situation in which Macduff finds himself, as dramatized by Shakespeare, no certain standards can possibly determine whether he would be better to remain at home with his family or to seek in England Edward's intervention in the Scottish cause. That Shakespeare not only dramatized this insoluble dilemma but was also aware of its implications can best be shown by citing another segment of Ross's IV. ii. response to Lady Macduff, where he becomes, for me, a choral spokesperson for the playwright:

But cruel are the times when we are traitors
 And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumor
 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
 But float upon a wild and violent sea
 Each way and none.

(18-22)

A. P. Rossiter's commentary is illuminating from the Sartrean perspective:

It is not merely that Macbeth's fears of the treachery he himself has taught have converted him into a cruel tyrant, so that no man knows where his safety ends, and fear reigns in all hearts—even of those who can tell themselves (vainly) that they have nothing to fear—but that, with the release of the sub-human (or sub-natural),

it is impossible for men even to know themselves, for good or evil (or virtue or vice) have lost their outlines. Men fear and do not know why, like brutes: but worse than brutes, in that they *know they do not know*, and express the horror of the incomprehensible, the absolutely arbitrary: the thing that by all normal standards cannot be—yet is.¹⁰

The equivocation pervading a Scotland whereby traditional moral standards "fair" may be "foul" and "foul" may be "fair" (I. i. 11) is most profoundly realized in the confusions relating to Macduff's perplexing alternatives.

Eventually Macduff emerges as an admirable figure, from both a Shakespearean and Sartrean perspective, not because of the option that he selects, but because he accepts full responsibility for the consequences of his decision. After an initial desperate attempt to ward off the full pain of Ross' revelation by blaming his family's slaughter on "heaven" (IV. iii. 225), he squarely, as we have seen, confronts his own involvement, even overstates it, by concluding "Not for their own demerits, but for mine, / Fell slaughter on their souls" (228-29).

Shakespeare, as many of his commentators have made us aware, deeply assimilated the intellectual controversies of his day. Still, the extent of his imaginative probing of consciousness also allowed him to anticipate major strands of modern thinking, for example, Freudian, if we accept even a small part of Harold Bloom's startling claims.¹¹ My argument indicates how Shakespeare prefigured another area of modern outlook. At the same time, as I see it, this association allows us to understand his portrayal of Macduff's dilemma not as an unresolved conflict in Shakespeare's psyche, but as integral to his vision of Scotland's agony resulting from the rejection of established norms of human decency.

Providence College

Notes

¹Richard Horwich, "Integrity in *Macbeth*: The Search for the 'Single Stage of Man,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 29 (1978), 365-73.

²Franco Ferrucci, *The Poetics of Disguise: The Autobiography of the Work in Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare*, trans. Ann Dunnigan (Ithaca and New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), p. 156.

³Susan Snyder, "Macbeth: A Modern Perspective," in *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), 197-207.

⁴Reflecting extremes as represented by Horwich and Ferrucci, the developing critical response to Macduff combines diversity with interesting patterns. In the decade of the 1960's, favorable responses predominate with Macduff seen as either an agent of God—as in John B. Harcourt, "I Pray You, Remember the Porter," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12 (1961), 393-402 and Matthew N. Proser, *The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 75-79—or as the norm of humane values—as in Dolora G. Cunningham, "Macbeth: The Tragedy of the Hardened Heart," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14 (1963), 39-47 and D. W. Harding, "Women's Fantasy of Manhood: A Shakespearean Theme," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20 (1969), 245-53. An exception is Robert Ornstein's brief mention of family abandonment and overtolerance for corruption in *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1960), pp. 233-34. Favorable response on secular grounds continued into the 1970's with Horwich in 1978 and Vincent F. Petronella, "The Role of Macduff in *Macbeth*," *Études Anglaises*, 32 (1979), 11-19. The booming, cynical decade of the 1980's was less kind to Macduff's reputation, as ushered in by Ferrucci's claim that Macduff purposely willed his family's slaughter to prove his ruthlessness to Malcolm, and Harry Berger, Jr.'s suggestion that Macduff becomes Macbeth's ethical double, in "The Early Scenes of *Macbeth*: Preface to a New Interpretation," *ELH*, 47 (1980), 1-31. E. Pearlman contributes to the degenerating portrait by viewing Macduff as a bad father in "Malcolm and Macduff," *Studies in the Humanities*, 9 (1981), 5-10. Further blows are delivered by R. W. Desai's claim that Macduff deserts his family for his own political advancement in "Duncan's Duplicity," *The Upstart Crow*, 6 (1986), 22-32, and Andrew Gibson's supercilious assertions that Macduff lacks intelligence, emotional depth, and affection in "Malcolm, Macduff, and the Structure of *Macbeth*," in *Critical Essays on Macbeth*, eds. Linda Cookson and Brian Loughrey (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1988), pp. 94-99. But, throughout that decade and at the start of our own, defenders also arose, mostly praising Macduff's gender balance, as in Coppelia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), pp. 188-90; Arthur Kirsch, "Macbeth's Suicide," *ELH*, 51 (1984), pp. 269-96; and Robert Kimbrough, *Shakespeare and the Art of Human Kindness* (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press International, 1990), pp. 126-27, also including the footnote on pp. 228-29. Uncharacteristically for its time, Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., restates the view of Macduff as God's agent in *Crime and God's Judgment in Shakespeare* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1984), pp. 195-204. The two critics who most resemble my approach by recognizing these conflicting views and trying to account for them by the play's ambiguous representation of Macduff are Janet Adelman, "Born of Woman': Fantasies of Male Power in *Macbeth*," in *Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance*, ed. Marjorie Garber (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1987), pp. 107-09, and Alice N. Benston, "Freud Reading Shakespeare Reading Freud: The Case of Macduff," *Style*, 23 (1989), pp. 261-79. The explanations each gives from psychological perspectives—Adelman, that the play exhibits Shakespeare's ambivalence toward the fantasy of masculine escape from the female and Benston, that Shakespeare delineates through Macduff first insufficient anxiety (in the Freudian sense) and then appropriate anxiety—differ from my conclusion following from ethical considerations.

⁵Quotations from *Macbeth*, subsequently to be cited in the text, are taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

⁶Holinshed's account presents Macduff as already aware of his family's slaughter before his meeting with Malcolm and does not, as I read it, convey any indication of Macduff's complicity in the atrocity. By giving voice,

however briefly, to a wife's plight during military preparations, Shakespeare continues in *Macbeth* the trend he established with Kate in *Henry IV, Part 1* and Portia in *Julius Caesar*.

⁷His unexpectedly worldly-wise response, "then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang up them," (57-59) to his mother's claim that "honest men" will be the hangmen of those who swear and lie, recalls Rosalind's assertion in *As You Like It* that "Love . . . deserves as well as dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too" (III. ii. 390-94).

⁸See Robert G. Collmer, "An Existentialist Approach to *Macbeth*," *The Personalist*, 41 (1960), 484-91; Anne Paolucci, "Shakespeare and the Genius of the Absurd," *Comparative Drama*, 7 (1973), 231-46; and Horst Breuer, "Disintegration of Time in *Macbeth's* Soliloquy, 'Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow,'" *The Modern Language Review*, 71 (1976), 256-71. Breuer, who elucidates *Macbeth's* most famous soliloquy by comparing it to Beckett's views of time, commendably tries to explain from a historical, although rigidly Marxist perspective why similarly nihilistic attitudes would be present in Shakespeare's age and our own. Jonathan Dollimore argues throughout *Radical Tragedy* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984) that Renaissance thinkers such as Montaigne and Machiavelli and much Jacobean tragedy reject, as does existentialism, the essentialist conception of humanity. Although I believe existentialist incertitude to be present for much of *Macbeth*, I, contrary to certain recent trends, hold that *Macbeth's* demise and Malcolm's ascendancy reverse this view.

⁹Translated by Philip Mairet (London: Methuen, 1948).

¹⁰*Angel with Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures*, ed. Graham Storey (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1961), pp. 212-13. For different readings of these lines, see Benston, p. 268, and T. McAlindon, *Shakespeare and Decorum* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 138.

¹¹*The Western Canon* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 371-94.

Edgar's Audience and Shakespeare's: A Comparison by Eileen Z. Cohen

On realizing that he has lost his audience, the Player in *Rosencranz and Guildensten Are Dead* declares, as though a life contract has been broken, "we pledged our identities, secure in the conventions of our trade, that someone would be watching. And then, gradually, no one was. . . . The silence was unbearable, it imposed itself upon us; it was obscene." The actors continued because they felt that perhaps an audience was hiding in the bushes. It took them a while to perceive that there was none; ". . . like runaway carts they dragged to a halt." The absence of audience both offends and appalls the Player. What he does not comment on is the significance of his feeling the obscenity of it. To be without an audience brings great anxiety to this character and incapacitates him. However, he does not realize why he responds in this way. Conversely, I think that Shakespeare's role-playing character, Edgar, in *King Lear* does know the significance of the player-audience interchange.¹ Through him Shakespeare moves us, his larger audience, to emotional and imaginative response even as Edgar and his various audiences are so moved. The obscenity would lie in our not being moved. Somehow, it is the very barrenness of the stage, nakedness of the characters, and unadorned quality of some of the language that affirm emotion and imagination.² Here, as perhaps in none of Shakespeare's other plays, we are taken to the essential experience, beyond the conventions of myth, social and religious attitudes, and even art, and it is primarily Edgar who takes us there.³

"The lunatic, the lover and the poet / Are of imagination all compact" (*MND*, V. i. 6-7). Shakespeare had given this sentiment to one of his early lovers. Theseus seems here to be condemning himself as lunatic and artist, as well. With Edgar, we have no such speculation as he integrates and assimilates these roles, or at least, acts them. In so doing he delineates the aesthetic and spiritual limits of the imagination both for his audience and for Shakespeare's.

On the title-page of the first published version of the 1608 Quarto of *King Lear* "*the vnfortunate life of Edgar, sonne / and heire to the Earle of Gloster, and his sullen and assumed humor of Tom of Bedlam*"⁴ is included in the descriptive title. While Shakespeare was probably not responsible for this title, it is apparent that his

audience thought Edgar a featured player. His disguises and "playlets" surely define him as one of Shakespeare's "poets." Theseus would apparently have found the madness, then, not a pretended one. Whether or not one finds Edgar motivated by a Machiavellian nature or by other sinister motives in his manipulation of Gloucester,⁵ in much of the play he apparently comes to know his feelings and perhaps comes to forgive his father in the generally unforgiving world of this play. These emotions may indeed be mad in the world of *King Lear*, but they must be reckoned with because the characters here find love and hate outside of the purview of justice. Edgar ultimately is a lover—not as Nahum Tate would have it in his marrying Edgar to Cordelia, but as a lover who brings "comfort" instead of "dispair" (Sonnet 144)—one who goes beyond the obvious "who deserves what" to a more subtle and basic response in a world where reason betrays.

In the Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*, Edgar's character does not assume the disguise of madness; Shakespeare, however, apparently wanted to weave all of these motifs together. He found some of them intertwined, along with the name for one of the villains, in Harsnett's tract "A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures . . . Practised by Edmonds alias Weston, A Jesuit," (1603) with its "sense of a wickedness inexplicable by reason."⁶ The lamentable condition of the Bedlam beggars, who may or may not be mad; who may or may not be charlatans; who may or may not believe themselves possessed by demons, points up Edgar's ambiguity and motives in choosing the role. ". . . Bedlam beggars . . . / Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers, / Enforce their charity" (II. iii. 14-20). The same may be said of this play as well. Sometimes with curses, sometimes with miracles, Shakespeare enforces his charity.

As the play opens, we are impressed and appalled by the materialism and superficiality of some of the characters. We are about to be subjected to Lear's very bad performance as king and as father, and to Gloucester's as father. The latter's language on speaking about and to Edmund is informal and colloquial and in prose. For all of its openness and geniality, it is also indiscreet and unseemly. In contrast, Lear's language is formal, royal and in poetry. It, too, is, at the very least, indiscreet and unseemly. Thus, the play immediately presents us with a linguistic dilemma; neither honest, forthright prose nor formal, royal poetry is to be trusted. (Or is Shakespeare preparing to tell us something about the people who speak the words?) Goneril tells Lear that she loves him "more than word can wield the matter," and that that love "makes breath poor and speech unable" (I. i. 54; 59). However,

she does speak, and it takes her some seven lines to say it in rather expansive language. Grand abstractions such as *space, liberty, honor, beauty* punctuate her language. Cordelia, on the other hand, can only “. . . Love, and be silent” (I. i. 61), certainly a comment that questions the ability of language to express feeling.

Shakespeare, very early in the play then, uses sleight of hand. Now we see the limitations of language as we watch and listen to Cordelia; now we don't as the language of the play absorbs us—both Lear's and Shakespeare's. There is even more irony in Cordelia's comment in that it is an aside—an obvious theatrical device. The refrain of “Nothing,” amended by its many synonyms, begins in this scene, as well (I. i. 86-90). But Cordelia does speak. Of course, what she says is not to her father's liking, and the process of denial, of stripping away, of coming down to the essential self begins. Part of what these characters learn, those who do learn, is that the journeys into self are made alone. When Kent chastises Lear for the banishment of Cordelia, calling him mad (I. i. 145), and warns that overblown language does not always bespeak a generous spirit (I. i. 151-53), Lear swears by Apollo, the god of light and poetry (I. i. 158), to which Kent replies, “Now, by Apollo, King / Thou swear'st thy Gods in vain” (I. i. 159-60). Whether it is in vain because Lear surely will not hear if Apollo answers, or if the gods will not heed Lear's curses, or if the gods do not pay attention to human beings, we can only surmise. The play, however, will proceed to assert and deny all of these simultaneously.

In the next scene, Gloucester, too, will be cheated by language as Edmund gives him the forged letter. Lest, however, we think of Edmund as a subtle villain, as a character who is aware of the nuances of the language he uses, Shakespeare presents us with the speciousness of Edmund's argument concerning inheritance. Edmund thinks that he would inherit were it not for his bastardy, but, of course, he is also a second son. The gods not only need to stand up for bastards but also to stand down for the first born. The soliloquy, with its blank verse—both obviously devices that are theatrical—is fallacious and full of questions, and since he is alone, he must seem to believe these arguments. (Indeed, the entire scene is in prose except for the soliloquies that begin and end it). For all of his machinations, he is not all that subtle; it is rather that he finds easy dupes—at least early in the play—a father and a brother who at this juncture are both incredibly naive.

Edgar is as easily taken in by appearances and the notion that words *are* their meanings as is his father. We are more sympathetic to him than we are to Gloucester because he has apparently done

nothing to warrant Edmund's enmity. Edmund sees his brother as "the catastrophe of the old comedy," his own "cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam" (I. ii. 131-133), and Edgar acknowledges on hearing Edmund's lies, "Some villain hath done me wrong" (I. ii. 160).

The intermingling of the awareness of art with the prosaic and superficial is part of the texture of Edgar's character, of most of the characters, whether they are good or evil, and of the larger world of the play. These ambiguities take us ultimately to an affirmation of feeling, as reason and the senses betray in the world of *King Lear*, and to an affirmation of the imagination. Only with imagination and creativity can we get beyond appearances. Our imaginations differentiate us from "a poor, bare, forked animal" (III. iv. 105-106). *King Lear* forces us to get beyond appearances because it, as a play, does just that.

Early in the play we see that language is often inadequate, as Cordelia finds it so in Act One, scene one; words betray Gloucester, Edgar, and Lear subsequently. So, too, do actions. Near the outset, Goneril tells Oswald to be disdainful of Lear (I. iii. 13 ff). She prods her father, knowing that he will run to Regan, only to be rejected there, as well. Letters are exchanged and indeed events proceed as Goneril and Regan predict. The play is full of letters—some forged, some bearing plans and plots, some that miscarry, some that will betray good intentions, and some about love from people who cannot love. Indeed, Edmund's last words will be an attempt that will fail to thwart his "writ" (V. iii. 244) to kill Cordelia and Lear. These actions and words all fail.

While Lear is being "handled" by his two older daughters, in the pragmatic, superficial world that they inhabit, they see themselves as having been misused. One hundred knights are untidy; they do make a mess. What does a "retired" king need them for? Lear probably did always love Cordelia better. In a world where appearances tell all, Goneril and Regan are "reasonable" in their assessments of their father and his retinue. Haven't they learned this lesson from his performance in which he insisted the words and their meanings are the same?

Meanwhile in the Gloucester household (II. i), on receiving news of the imminent arrivals of Cornwall and Regan and the growing enmity between Cornwall and Albany, Edmund decides that this is the opportune time to expand the split between Edgar and their father. Again we hear lies—Edgar's seeming involvement in the faction against Cornwall (II. i. 25). As Gloucester approaches, Edmund counterfeits a duel with Edgar, and Edgar's fate is sealed as he flees. Gloucester, who has already believed

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Edmund's lies about Edgar, asks where the villain is (II. i. 37). Edmund replies with a description of a stereotypical villain, one who mumbles wicked charms and conjures up the moon to do evil (II. i. 37-40), a figure not at all like himself. He describes how Edgar has been planning parricide and how he, himself, has come to be "wounded." He stood unarmed as Edgar attacked. He even creates a speech for Edgar, attacking himself thereby. In a nice turn, he "quoting" Edgar says, "No: what I [Edgar] should deny, —/ As this I [Edgar] would; ay, though thou [Edmund] didst produce / My very character—I'd [Edgar would] turn it all / To thy suggestion, plot, and damned practice" (II. i. 69-72). Thus, Edmund writes his own play, plays both characters, and takes a disguise thereby. After all, he is Edmund, being Edgar, who, being caught, would pretend it was Edmund's plot. All of this is made "real" with props—a self-inflicted wound and a forged letter. Gloucester is deceived by Edmund's words and by dramatic signs. Also, had he not heard Edmund cry out as Edgar had fled?

What is the other audience to think then? What can we know as we watch? Will our dramatist deceive us as Edmund has deceived Gloucester? Are all deceptions to evil purpose? Are we so easily fooled? By life? By art? Shakespeare's play will ironically go beyond appearance. Not to be able to get beyond appearances is to doom human beings. Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that imagination may not only enable us to respond creatively, but that it also can save us from being "unaccommodated." The very structure of this play indicates this as we watch with horror the crimes and behaviour of these characters. Humanity is stripped even as the stage and some of the characters are bared; the knowledge derived from the senses and reason is often invalid. Senses and reason disfunction. Gloucester is blind; Lear is mad; language is incoherent; disguise itself becomes the taking off of clothes. Yet, beyond the literal Gloucester sees, Lear is sane; the Fool, mad Lear, and "mad" Edgar all make sense. Kent, who also always made sense, appears in disguise through all of this. Human beings can accommodate themselves to the world without losing their decency.

The scenes on the heath (III. ii; III. iv; III. vi) *show* us what we are asked to *feel*. Edgar will help us to feel even as he does. In his soliloquy when he takes on the disguise of a Bedlam beggar, he tells us why he does so, "to preserve" himself (II. iii. 6). He is here more than passive or masochistic.⁸ Rather, he seems to value his life as he thinks "To take the basest and most poorest shape / That ever penury, in contempt of man, / Brought near to beast" (II. iii. 7-9). One supposes that he is talking about his inner well-being,

as well as his physical safety. To be near naked in a storm on the heath is to be physically vulnerable. True, most people accosted by a dirty, ragged Bedlam beggar, marked as mad, would take pains to avoid him, but he does not take on the disguise to avoid vulnerability that crowded places often pose to an outcast. He is alone when he announces that he will begrime his face and scar himself until the Fool finds him in the hovel on the heath (III. iv. 39).

Tom informs the subsequent action when he speaks of this disguise; "this horrible object," curses, prayers, and charity. He will also slip the skin of his old self. "Edgar I nothing am" (II. iii. 21). But of course he is Edgar, Edgar pretending to be Tom, while he, Edgar, finds his way back to a world that he was too naive or unimaginative to conceive of as evil. As he becomes nothing, paradoxically he simultaneously begins the journey to awareness. Lover, madman, and poet coalesce on that odyssey. As the action of the characters in the heath and Dover scenes become more surreal, the settings and props become more basic, and the language more disjointed and metaphoric. The madness, both feigned and real, contributes to the grotesque quality of these scenes.⁹ Edgar quite literally pretends to be a fictional character, recreating his identity until ultimately he will become the heroic knight who will kill Edmund.¹⁰ We watch as Edgar takes on his first role, that of Tom, a person who pretends to be a madman since these "Abraham men" were often feigners.¹¹

The pretended madness coming together with clinical madness is not an unusual device in the drama of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Shakespeare had used it before in *Hamlet*. There, though, they were in the same character if one considers Hamlet to be actually mad while he is pretending to be mad. The same device occurs in *The Spanish Tragedy vis à vis Hieronimo* and *Isabella*, where the theatricality of the technique is enhanced by Isabella's mad distraction when she strips the trees before stabbing herself (IV. ii) and by the play-within-the-play in foreign tongues (IV. iv).¹² If we turn to a Jacobean play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, for example, probably written within ten years of *King Lear*, we also find a very different kind of portrayal of madness from that of *King Lear*. Ferdinand is obviously insane, but the pretended madness is a theatrical experience. The eight madmen who come under Bosola's direction to drive the Duchess insane do not otherwise participate in the plot. Their presence is accompanied by all kinds of props—a coffin, cords, a dead man's hand, a bell, etc. The stage is dark; we witness a performance. This episode has been preceded by the Duchess's seeing the wax

images of her “dead” husband and children (IV. i). Indeed Bosola calls it “this sad spectacle” (IV. i. 57), and it marks the end of the Duchess’s life (IV. ii).¹³ In addition, the clinically mad Ferdinand and the Bedlamites are all stereotypes “delineated as accessories to tragedy rather than as genuine symptomatic studies.”¹⁴ The characters create an atmosphere of evil and mental terror.

In *King Lear*, Edgar, instead of seeing his own bizarre disguise as “spectacle,” refers to it, or rather himself in it, as an “object” (II. iii. 17). The mad scenes on the heath are focussed dead center in the middle of the play. Ironically, neither we nor the characters are terrorized by the madness. We and they are terrorized by the sane people who have driven these characters out onto the heath. Lear’s madness appalls us, but we see it as beyond mere madness because there is much clarity in it. As the trappings of the court, wealth, and power are eliminated, decent behavior surfaces. Lear’s deference to Tom, his caring for the Fool, the characters’ generosity to each other as they huddle together all emerge as a tableau. The only prop is a joint stool to stand for Goneril. Life, the world of the play, and Shakespeare’s artistry seem to have come down to their essentials. Shakespeare simultaneously creates and uncreates the play.

As for Tom, because we know that he is in disguise, we are always aware of his past (as he must be), his motives, of the world from which he comes—as well as of madness and feigned madness. In some ways his pretense makes the scene less frightening rather than more. Perhaps his performance prepares us for Lear’s condition. In Edgar, a near naked madman anticipates Lear’s appearance fantastically dressed. These scenes are far less terrifying than Gloucester’s castle which now houses sane and very evil characters. There is natural distress on the heath, which points up the indifference of nature to the human plight and the inability of some of the characters to accept that indifference. Certainly the physical pain is enormous, but there are here no human beings who inflict violence and evil on each other. For us, watching the characters search for their best selves, this scene seems almost a comfort.

Not to be able to find comfort or justice from the gods is frightening; not to receive it from our own kind, in this play, is even more frightening. If the gods do not answer prayers, they also do not act on human curses. This quartet of characters, isolated from the others, can enforce their charity as Edgar had stated when taking on the disguise of Tom. True he may have meant merely that the Bedlam beggars, by cursing and praying, coerce people into giving them money to be rid of them—not at all

charitable. However, the behavior of these characters on the heath bespeaks courtesies freely given.

The language on the heath, what with the linguistic peculiarities of Lear, Tom, and the Fool, becomes more fractured; the deeper the meanings, the more complex the subtleties. The song that the Fool sings (III. ii. 74-78) with its "Though the rain it raineth every day" illustrates these nuances. It is obviously "art" as its form, a ballad, and the fact that it is sung by the professional actor of the group indicate. It is also an allusion to another song, sung by another clown, ironically in a comedy (*Twelfth Night*, V. i. 391-410). Paradoxically the heath scenes (III. ii; III. iv; III. vi) are full of "un" art and "un" theatre, as well. These can be seen in the prose gibberish of Tom, "O! do de do de do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, starblasting and taking!" (III. iv. 57-59); the static abstractions of his seven deadly sins (III. iv. 83-97); his charms to ward off fiends (III. iv. 114-120; 134-136); the Fool's prophecy in didactic couplets (III. ii. 79-95); Lear's curses at the unseen and unknown (III. ii. 14-24); the reverberations of *nothing* and *no*; the non-action; the nakedness; the uncluttered stage—all make the audience respond with charity as we see these characters respond so to each other. Not only is the action of the play static, linguistically it is unpoetic or "ordinary," if we associate the poetry of the play with blank verse, or if we are not using the word metaphorically.¹⁵

The storm still rages in Act Three, and Kent urges Lear to quit the rain and enter the hovel, "Good my Lord, enter here," to which Lear fills out the line with "Wilt break my heart?" (III. iv. 4). Small, kind gestures from a stranger, as Kent is in disguise, move the old man as filial ingratitude had not. As he had left Goneril's house, he had asked "sweet heaven; / Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!" (I. v. 42-43); now before the hovel he talks about his heart. He has begun to move from explaining relationships in terms of the head—who *owes* what to whom, and now moves to emotions by Kent's unowed and natural gesture.

Lear "will endure" (III. iv. 18) on such a night as this one and bids the Fool precede him into the hovel. Before he will pray and sleep, however, he begins to consider the unknown "Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are" of whom he has taken too little care. He charges pomp to expose itself, "to feel what wretches feel," in order to compensate for the wretchedness "And show the heavens more just" (III. iv. 26-36). Here Lear feels, but he still thinks in terms of divine justice. He equates ceremony, i.e. pomp, with divinity. If those in power feel for "houseless poverty," it is a human response—not a sign of heaven. Ultimately, this play tells us what human beings may think of the gods and that their justice

is irrelevant to the human experience. Human beings must care for each other. Justice is not forthcoming from the gods. They seem entirely indifferent to the people in this play. If there is divine justice, humans are completely unable to read it, as Lear is to find.

The Fool, frightened by a "spirit," Tom, comes running from the hut. Tom speaks of his being pursued by "the foul fiend" who has led him through fire and flame, given him nightmares, and been responsible for all of the forces that have beset him. With it all, he blesses Lear for showing him the charity of asking after the cause of his distress (III. iv. 46-61). Lear assumes that Tom's troubles stem from daughters. The gods punish men for having "begot / Those pelican daughters" (III. iv. 73-74). Tom, for his part, suggests that the foul fiend can be kept at bay if one obeys one's parents, keeps one's word, does not swear, commit adultery, or covet rich clothing (III. iv. 77-81). This advice seems more nice than virtuous. Certainly, it is naive and superficial. Edgar should know better as he apparently had obeyed these injunctions but had been punished anyway. Indeed, he seems to recognize this irony as he refers to Tom in the third person (III. iv. 81), making us aware once again that Edgar plays a role. Lear cannot resist Tom's plight; he might well have denied Edgar's. Believing what he does about filial ingratitude, Lear would hardly have been receptive to Edgar's tale about a son, discarded by a father—especially since that father is an old friend.

Lear, caught up in his feelings, asks how Tom came to this pass, and Tom continues his tale of fiends and lust and supernatural retribution for sin. Lear feels the kinship—the madness, the daughters, and now the nakedness. Tom is "the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art," and Lear calls for help to unbutton his clothes (III. iv. 104-07)—a gesture that will occur again in the play. Such a small item of accommodated man is a button! Royal garments and the outward vanities of pomp have come to this.

As Gloucester enters, Tom sings a charm to ward off evil spirits. From Edgar's point of view his father is the fiend who has brought him to the heath—"The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman" (III. iv. 140). Gloucester has disobeyed Goneril and Regan's orders and come in kindness to offer Lear shelter—a reverberation of the early part of the scene when Lear sent the Fool into the hovel. Tom repeats that he is cold, while Lear, instead of accepting Gloucester's hospitality, wishes first to discuss the storm. "What is the cause of thunder?" This for Lear is a very pressing question, thus qualifying both his concern for Tom and Gloucester's

courage. In effect, he asks what has made him mad. "This philosopher" (III. iv. 151), Tom, declares that his specialty is "How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin" (III. iv. 156)—equally nuanced language.

Kent and Gloucester wish to care for Lear and get him out of the cold; however, it is Edgar who allows Lear to care for Tom as Tom once again declares that he is cold and Lear pursues his company. They all go into the hovel, and the scene ends with Gloucester's injunction to Lear, "No words, no words: hush" (III. iv. 178). To this Tom offers satiric comment on words and heroic tales, "*Child Rowland to the dark tower came, / His word was still: Fie foh and fum, / I smell the blood of a British man*" (III. iv. 179-81). Edgar may also be making ironic comment on his father's heroic gesture to Lear in the face of Gloucester's rejection of his own son on very flimsy evidence. Even so, Gloucester's kindness is real and in view of the subsequent action, heroic—not defiant of giants, perhaps, but rather of petty, mean, human viciousness.

Lear desires to bring his evil daughters to justice, and he assigns the parts. If he controlled the universe, he would arraign Goneril. Edgar is appointed judge and says quite coherently "Let us deal justly" (III. vi. 40). Lear desires human justice now as he had desired divine justice before. However, he is to find that there is neither. He has not deserved what he has received from Goneril and Regan, but he also does not deserve the devotion and protection that Cordelia gives him. Justice, like everything else in this play, is ambiguous. It is both to be desired and not to be desired. If Lear were to get justice, neither Cordelia nor Kent would forgive him.

As Lear "sees" Goneril escape, Kent feels pity and asks Lear to be patient (III. vi. 57). Edgar's response, in an aside, is somewhat different. He is so moved by his own feelings that he has difficulty maintaining his disguise. "My tears begin to take his part so much, / They mar my counterfeiting" (III. vi. 59-60). In this comment and in the Dover scene Shakespeare gives Edgar many asides, a theatrical device which acknowledges the existence of an audience. Ironically, with those asides Edgar loses his disguise and speaks in his own person, revealing his real feelings, saying in effect that artifice and emotion, Art and Nature, are essentially antithetical.

Thus feelings begin to destroy his illusion of madness as Gloucester arrives to protect the King. All go off to find safety for Lear except Edgar who in a soliloquy, another obvious theatrical device, considers human suffering. It is a great leveller; all come to it. "He [Lear] childed as I fatherd" (III. vi. 108). There is also

human community in suffering, as well. "How light and portable my pain seems now, / When that which makes me bend makes the king bow" (III. vi. 106-07). He affirms once again that humans must live in the hope that fortunes do improve (IV. i. 1-10). However, he is about to find that such is not to be the case. He meets his father, now blind, and knows that "the worst is not / So long as we can say 'This is the worst'" (IV. i. 27-28).

At this meeting Gloucester once again displays his kindness. Even though he acknowledges that human beings are the playthings of the gods, he requests covering for Tom. As Edgar, in the role of Tom, had enabled Lear to show compassion, now he does so with his own father. Edgar still pretends to be Nothing, but more and more his feelings assault him. Even as he should hate his father, or be angry with him, he says, "Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed," and role-playing is again momentarily set aside. Gloucester wishes to go to Dover and to have a madman lead him there. He, too, speaks of compassion that is wanting in him who will merely see "Because he does not feel" (IV. i. 68). Feelings transcend what our senses tell us.

Dover, earlier in the play, had been a place of political rescue where Cordelia would land to save Lear. For Gloucester it is a place of hope. Ironically, hope for him is associated with the desire to end his life. Only then can his despair end. With Edgar's play at Dover we have the culmination of his relationship with his father and his descent into himself. The fiend is exorcized (IV. vi. 69-73). In this scene we and Gloucester are forced to participate in the action. If we see only realistic action on the stage, we are more observers than participants. Imagination forces our involvement more than the very realistic that we know is not real. If all of the action were explicitly presented, then we, the audience, would remain passive. If, however, we are forced to draw conclusions as we do in life, we must participate. Explicit dramatic action deprives us of our own experience. The kind of drama that exploits implications ultimately perceives the possibility of a void. It allows for all of the possibilities of metaphor. Such a play asserts itself in the present tense. We are not distanced from it. In the Dover scene, Edgar asks little of Gloucester when he asks his father to suspend disbelief because the feelings he thereby engenders are real. The same may be said of Shakespeare and his audience.

At Dover Edgar appears first in the disguise of a peasant. Unlike Tom, this character has no name. Therefore, we must assume it is Edgar acting much as himself, different only in clothing. Gloucester is in doubt of his surroundings. He

questions Edgar about them, not quite believing that the way is steep or that he hears the sea (IV. vi. 3-4). Kent had said in hope of Cordelia's intervention, "Nothing almost sees miracles, / But misery" (II. ii. 161-62). In the Dover scene we see a miracle of a different sort, the triumph of imagination that is a microcosm of the larger play. When Gloucester suspects that the drama in which he is participating is not real, Edgar explains away his suspicions with "Why, then your other senses grow imperfect / By your eyes' anguish" (IV. vi. 5-6). Presumably the imagination flourishes. Edgar then convinces him that he, Edgar, has not changed, that his voice has not altered: "You're much deceiv'd; in nothing am I changed / But in my garments" (IV. i. 9-10). Edgar here seems to be not only the author of the piece, but also to be making a comment on acting. Further, he describes the scene in great detail to convince Gloucester that they are indeed at Dover; just as Shakespeare has convinced us of the larger vision of this play—of a fairytale father who divides his kingdom and of his good and evil children. Imagination is evoked by the nuance and subtlety of the telling, with all of its implied meanings. Gloucester's belief in Dover can perhaps be dismissed as gullibility. Are we willing to say the same about ourselves and our suspension of disbelief? Shakespeare has worked much more magic than that, as we believe that Edgar exists even as we reject his Dover.

Gloucester bids Edgar farewell with a blessing (IV. vi. 29-30), a gift (IV. vi. 28), "With all [his] heart" (IV. vi. 32)—all stuff of feeling. Shakespeare then garners the audience's participation by having Edgar in an aside consider the motives for his behavior—not for gifts, or blessing, or revenge, but rather to "cure" his father of his despair (IV. vi. 34). He, too, speaks from the heart as the word *cure* is obviously used metaphorically as well as literally here. Gloucester calls on the gods to bless his elder son if he still lives. Since we know that he does, our despair, as well, at least for the moment is mitigated. Edgar makes an ambiguous comment about imagination just after Gloucester "falls"; "And yet I know not how conceit may rob / The treasury of life when life itself / Yields to the theft" (IV. vi. 42-44). He does not know how fancy works; he does know that there is an interplay between life, that is, what is real and our imaginations. He knows that we allow our imaginations to suspend "life" willingly.

Edgar tells his father, "Thy life's a miracle" (IV. vi. 55). Whether or not it is depends on from whose perspective the event is viewed. Gloucester has momentarily been saved from his despair; that is a miracle. Edgar has given his father a gift; that

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is a miracle. And we have witnessed the scene and believed in the lives of these characters. The ability to transcend our senses, the imagination, has enabled us to feel what these characters feel as they transcend their senses. Gloucester cannot see and did not "see;" now he does. Edgar, who should be motivated by "justice," an eye for an eye, helps his father to overcome his despair if only for a time. Shakespeare has once again shown us that our senses and actions can deceive; as Gloucester is once again taken in by the actions of a son. It may not be true that he has literally been saved by the gods (IV. vi. 73-74), but it is not unkind to let him think so.

If in the world of this play life were without nuance, then we would know that deception is wrong. Shakespeare, the master deceiver, does not say that. What we know depends on our "vision," relying on our ability to get beyond appearances. We can do that only through our imaginations. What we feel then depends on our ability to get beyond what our senses tell us. We learn that repeatedly in *King Lear*; the Dover scene spells it out most graphically. Edgar's play has no props, the stage is bare, he is in disguise and even changes roles as we watch; and still Gloucester believes. The same has been true of much of Shakespeare's play, and we believe. Sometimes we believe only in the horrors of the life of this play. We, too, want an ounce of civet to sweeten our imaginations, to sweeten the smell of mortality. Shakespeare and Edgar seem to be in agreement that it is unimaginative and unfeeling and "mad" to believe in a world of total injustice as in one of total justice. To believe that one is "ague-proof" (IV. vi. 105) is surely to be insensitive to life. Edgar, thrusts his theatricality upon the other characters just as Shakespeare does upon us, to make us feel.

When Gloucester meets Lear again and must deal with his sane insanity, he sees "This great world" (IV. vi. 133) "feelingly" (IV. vi. 145). Edgar comments, "I would not take this from report; it is, / And my heart breaks at it" (IV. vi. 139-140). He must perceive it and then feel it. He has gone beyond merely seeing it; for Gloucester, who is blind, has responded "feelingly," as well. And so have we.

From here to the end of the play, there are many twists of plot, many reports of events, some of them false, and many assertions of feeling. When Edgar would lead Gloucester to shelter, Gloucester calls the gods "ever-gentle" even while he acknowledges that he might once again despair and attempt suicide. "Let not my worse spirit tempt me again / To die before you please!" (IV. vi. 214-16). Evidently a belief in gentle gods does not relieve

anxieties about the human condition. Later he wishes he were mad, "So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs, / And woes by wrong imaginations lose / The knowledge of themselves" (IV. vi. 278-81). We have seen and we know that such distraction does not necessarily diminish feeling grief. Edgar comments on his father's vacillations, "What! in ill thoughts again? Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither: / Ripeness is all" (V. ii. 9-11).

With that the play's questions still remain unanswered. The only answer is that we must accept as best we can what Edgar and this play offer. Gloucester's response to Edgar is equally ambiguous, "And that's true too" (V. ii. 12). Both the *and* and the *too* insist that there are many answers to the cosmic *why?*, each probably valid for the particular person in the particular circumstance—both in this play and in life. Further, there are multiple reconciliations and revenges in the play. The characters' responses to life keep shifting as ours do to the events of the play. As Lear and Cordelia come together, we know once again that justice may not be what Lear wants from people or the gods. If such were the case, Cordelia would reject her father. Neither love nor hate is justified or earned in this play.

In the final moments of *King Lear* it is almost as though the dramatist mocks us that we come to the theatre to receive answers to cosmic questions. What we do get is feeling. Artistically he has moved us beyond the theatrical even while encouraging us to use our imaginations to feel the lives of these characters. He has also given us in Edgar a character who parallels himself—who is poet, "madman," and who evokes emotions in the other characters. Edgar often speaks directly to us as "dramatist." He is a "lover" who has given comfort. Shakespeare, through this character, his disguises and linguistic play, parallels the shifting devices of the play itself. First there are props as Lear divided the map; then there are almost none in the heath and Dover scenes. Edgar ultimately confronts Edmund as a knight errant who has made his journey and asserts his identity as Edgar with great formality as an aristocrat, a far cry from Tom. The reports, formally narrated, and the asides and soliloquies are all conventions of theatre, but Lear's final fumbling with his button denies the stereotypical. The conventions of the play have been deconventionalized—even as conventional answers to the reasons for human suffering have been offered and been rejected. Our responses are not by rote but are real. Lear's travail is intense and so is ours.

The Upstart Crow

When Lear carries in Cordelia, he says, "I know when one is dead, and when one lives" (V. iii. 259). But he does not know. When he asks, "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, / And thou not breath at all?" (V. iii. 305-306), there is no answer. Only the common courtesies and civilities remain—"Pray you" and "thank you" (V. iii. 308). For the dramatist, the small gesture and stage business of unbuttoning remain. Kent had asked "Is this the promis'd end?" (V. iii. 262). We, the audience, might well ask the same question of the dramatist, and Edgar's reply, "Or image of that horror?" (V. iii. 263) might well be his. Once again our feelings and those of the characters merge. We, too, become the victims of the emotions of this play.

There is an open-ended quality to *King Lear*, intensified by all of its ambiguities and unanswered questions. However, some things we do know—that life is tenuous, that the answers one gets to cosmic questions depend on the way in which and by whom the questions are asked, that language and actions are ultimately inadequate, and that imagination which takes us beyond the prosaic can enable us to, as Edgar says, "Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say" (V. iii. 323). We know, too, that art is not nature. Ultimately, the play "deconstructs" as words fail and we, too, come to the "promised end." Shakespeare has played according to the "rules," given us the conventions of the drama even as he has simultaneously undermined them. Shakespeare's dramatic process in *King Lear* ironically confirms Edgar's words—feelings are ultimately beyond dramatic presentation. The play must end with ambiguities confirmed.

Saint Joseph's University

Notes

¹A sample of the many helpful works dealing with the participation of audience within the dramatic process and how the dramatist uses it follows. Janet Adelman, ed. "Introduction," *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "King Lear"* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 3-4; Robert Egan, *Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of His Art in "King Lear," "The Winter's Tale," and "The Tempest"* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), 1-43; Michael Goldman, *Shakespeare and the Energies of Drama* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), *passim*; E.A.J. Honigman, *Shakespeare's Seven Tragedies: The Dramatist's Manipulation of Response* (London: McMillan Press, 1976), 101-19; Alvin B. Kernan, *Playwright as Magician* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 116-27; Maynard Mack, "Engagement and Detachment in Shakespeare's Plays," *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama in Honor of Hardin Craig*, ed. R. Hosley (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1962), pp. 280-83; Howard D. Pearce, "A Phenomenological

Approach to the Theatrum Mundi Metaphor," *PMLA*, 95 (1980), 42-49; Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 10-12; Anne Richter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), pp. 165-166; Michael Shapiro, "Role-Playing, Reflexivity, and Metadrama in Recent Shakespeare Criticism," *Renaissance Drama*, 12 (1981), 145-161; Thomas F. Van Laan, *Role-Playing in Shakespeare* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978), 197-209.

²For example, James Black, "King Lear: Art Upside-Down," *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), p. 36; Sigurd Burckhardt, "King Lear: the Quality of Nothing," *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), 238-59; James L. Calderwood, "Creative Uncreative in *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37 (1986), 5-18; Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 39-123; Egan, p. 50; Richard Fly, *Shakespeare's Mediated World* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 100-10; Kernan, p. 128; Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), 129-68; Derek Peat, "'And That's True Too': *King Lear* and the Tension of Uncertainty," *Shakespeare Survey*, 33 (1980), p. 49; Phyllis Rackin, *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978), 86-106; John Reibetanz, *The "Lear" World: A Study of "King Lear" in Its Dramatic Context* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), 81-101.

³Black, pp. 36; Rosalie Cole, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), p. 8.

⁴*The Arden "King Lear"*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1952), p. xviii. All references to *King Lear* cited are from this edition.

⁵Representative negative views of Edgar may be found in Calderwood, pp. 10-11; Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, pp. 52-57; S. L. Goldberg, *An Essay on "King Lear"* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 121; Marvin D. Rosenberg, *The Masks of "King Lear"* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), pp. 265-66.

⁶Geoffrey Bullough, ed. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare—Major Tragedies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 301.

⁷A very provocative essay that adds Edmund to the list of roles that Edgar plays is William C. Carroll, "The Bedlam Beggar and the Role of Edgar in *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38 (1987), 426-42.

⁸Adelman, p. 16.

⁹Kott, *passim*.

¹⁰Carroll, p. 434.

¹¹Bullough, p. 301; Stephen Goldblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), p. 117.

¹²The edition of this play used is contained in *Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. 1, eds. Russel A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin (New York: MacMillan, 1976).

¹³*Drama of the English Renaissance*, vol. 2.

¹⁴Robert Reed, *Bedlam on the Jacobean Stage* (New York: Octagon Press, 1970), p. 30.

¹⁵Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁶See Black, p. 39; Peat, p. 47; Goldblatt, pp. 117-19; Richard Fly, p. 109.

Boying Greatness: Shakespeare's Venus by Peter Hyland

It is a commonplace that, as a non-dramatic poem, *Venus and Adonis* presents itself to the imagination in a highly theatrical manner. As a recent editor, Maurice Evans, notes, there is "a strong dramatic dimension" to the narrative, which "is told mainly through dramatic dialogue."¹ There is nothing surprising in this; A. D. Cousins has pointed out that to consider Venus as a dramatic character is understandable "given that her creator was a playwright and that he gave her speech after speech."² Nevertheless most readings, including those of Evans and Cousins, engage the poem's literary rather than its dramatic dimension. Evans begins his account of it by insisting that it is "a very literary poem, both in language and kind."³ Robert Y. Turner in his examination of Shakespeare's early writing claims that "What is distinctive about *Venus and Adonis* is nondramatic."⁴ To some critics the poem's "dramatic dimension" has appeared detrimental to its artistic success; John Buxton, in a somewhat prescriptive reading, says that "*Venus and Adonis* suffers . . . from the defects of Shakespeare's supreme qualities as a dramatist. For the story he has to tell, he makes his characters too human and too dramatic: he thinks of Venus only as more powerful than Adonis when he should describe her as more divine; they are not enough idealized; and they talk too much."⁵ Venus, it is true, talks a lot (though she thinks that Adonis does not talk enough), and she is certainly more powerful than Adonis. What apparently offends Buxton in this is a lapse of decorum which he locates in the poet's inappropriate use of dramatic elements: the divine characters are diminished to a human stature inappropriate to myth. An unease about such incongruities has informed much of the criticism of *Venus and Adonis*. I shall argue, however, that the poem's vitality (which is surely a part of its literary value) arises from Shakespeare's cheerful attempt to graft what he had learned from his theatrical experience onto what must have been to him a loftier "literary" form. Unlike Perdita, he was not one to shun nature's bastards.

Many critics of the poem have considered that facet of it that Cousins calls "the comedy of gender-reversal,"⁶ and for many of them the characterization of Venus has presented a (literally and metaphorically) large problem. The word "grotesque" is one that

has frequently come to mind for the representation of the goddess of love as a "bold-faced suitor" sufficiently brawny to pluck the object of her affections from his horse and tuck him under her arm. Gordon Williams finds that in these actions she appears "too grotesque to command either [Adonis's] or the reader's whole-hearted sympathy," although he goes on to defend her developing role in the poem.⁷ Robert Ellrodt suggests that this grotesquery might have been handled successfully "in a Cervantic manner but the contrast between the actions of the characters and the prevailing prettiness of the descriptive style creates in the reader an unresolved conflict of impressions."⁸ In this he echoes Richard A. Lanham, for whom this "faddish sexual role-reversal" also creates a disjunction between rhetoric and action.⁹ Even Heather Dubrow, who at the beginning of her discussion of the poem notes the links between Venus and some of Shakespeare's dramatic characters, sees these links primarily in rhetorical terms. She acknowledges the ways in which Venus' behaviour imitates the actions of real people, but draws a line at this improbable act: "Few women could literally tuck a young man, however slim and 'hairless' he might be, under their arms."¹⁰ Clearly, Venus should not have plucked Adonis from his horse.

I should like to suggest that some of this unease with the presentation of Venus arises from the neglect of a fact that must surely have had some bearing on Shakespeare's construction of her character. As far as is known, all of Shakespeare's writing prior to the composition of this poem had been for the public playhouses. All of his female characters were written with the knowledge that they would be personated by boys, and the writer's consciousness that the staged "woman's part" had an unavoidable masculine core is apparent in many of the roles that he wrote early in his career. Consequently, when we contemplate the extent to which Venus is a "dramatic character," we do well to consider her as if she were a character in a play written by Shakespeare for the public theatre as it existed in 1592 rather than for the reader's private theatre. That is, at some level Shakespeare conceived of her as a cross-dressed boy, making playful use of his theatrical experience.

The generally accepted chronology suggests that by 1592 Shakespeare had written the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and possibly *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Taming of the Shrew*. Up to that time it appears that he was not attached to one particular company, and few details are known about the original performance of any of these plays. We do not know whether or not Shakespeare would have

known, when he wrote a play, which actors would have played specific roles. Michael Jameson has argued that later in his career he was able to count on highly competent boy actors, including at least one of great virtuosity who originated the role of Cleopatra as well as a number of other major female characters.¹¹ This, however, was after he became a permanent member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men; prior to that he presumably could not have had such confidence in the skills of those who would play his female roles.

In Shakespeare's plays there is little direct reference to the fact that boys played the parts of women; most of what there is acknowledges their potential for subverting the dramatic illusion: Flute's emerging beard, Hamlet's concern about the boy-actor's height and unbroken voice, Cleopatra's fear of squeaking boys. Even the page Bartholomew in *The Taming of the Shrew*, who, his employer is convinced, "will well usurp the grace, / Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman" (Ind. i. 127-28), needs only to convince the drunkard Sly of his authenticity, but even so might need an onion to help him shed tears. All of this is comic stuff, but it reflects a possibly frustrating practical reality.

In his early plays, whether because he distrusted the ability of the boy actors who embodied the female characters, or because he was intrigued by the ambiguities available in turning a boy into a woman, Shakespeare frequently stressed the "masculine" element in at least one (usually the leading) female role. This is done most obviously for Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, who spends most of the play disguised as a youth. In *Henry VI, Part 1* Joan La Pucelle spends much of her time in armor, and on her first appearance her manlike vigour is pointedly stressed when she is identified as "an Amazon" (I. iii. 83). This is a term rarely used by Shakespeare, but he uses it on two other occasions in the *Henry VI* plays, both with reference to Queen Margaret. In *Henry VI, Part 3* she is called "an Amazonian trull" by York (I. iv. 115); later, it is reported to King Edward that she is ready to put on armor, to which he replies "Belike she minds to play the Amazon" (IV. i. 104). In *Henry VI, Part 2*, in a line that compares the Queen's masculine nature to the effeminacy of her husband, it is said of their marriage that "in this place most masters wear no breeches" (I. iii. 150). This is immediately after she has given the Duchess of Gloucester a box on the ear. Something of the same physical aggressiveness is to be found in the "rough" Kate, neither gentle nor mild, of *The Taming of the Shrew*, who is first seen offering to brain Hortensio with a stool.

Of course, it is not only in these early plays that Shakespeare makes use of the gender conundrum of the boy actor, and much has been written about its implications, from Lisa Jardine's argument that the intention was to arouse male erotic interest to Stephen Orgel's more subtle analyses of gender demarcation.¹² Without denying the serious theoretical issues raised, I would suggest nevertheless that Shakespeare provided these character notes out of sheer practical necessity: just as Kate's masculine roughness is emphasized at the outset, Joan and Margaret are armoured Amazons because of the need to control the obtrusive maleness of the actor playing them (possibly the same boy).

One might think that the move to narrative poetry in *Venus and Adonis* would have liberated the writer from the necessity of incorporating Amazon elements into the women he constructed. It seems, however, that he decided to make comic use of his theatrical experience. He conceived the poem in part as if it were a play, a two-hander to be performed by two apprentices, one large and beefy, the other small and barely adolescent. He then gave them the wrong parts. The obvious incongruity of writing aggressive masculinity into Venus, goddess of love and feminine sexual beauty, is compounded by the outrageous inflation of that masculinity. One of its consequences is to drain virility out of Adonis, who is constantly mastered by her. No wonder he blushes and pouts: not only is his role inferior, but as things turn out, it is also shorter. The effect is of burlesque, a comic distortion and deflation of the characters akin to the later, much more ferocious deflation of mythic archetypes in *Troilus and Cressida*.

To generate and inflate the effect learned from his stage-women, Shakespeare has to establish Venus's masculinity from the outset, which he does in the first stanza, having her approach Adonis "like a bold-faced suitor" (6). This approach is turned almost immediately into the notorious physical action that has worried so many critics:

. . . desire doth lend her force
Courageously to pluck him from his horse.

Over one arm the lusty courser's rein,
Under her other was the tender boy.
(29-32)

The visualized effect of this is ludicrous, and it is augmented by the bullying way in which she makes her amorous approach to him: "Backward she pushed him, as she would be thrust, / And governed him in strength" (41-42). Having set this character note

from the beginning, Shakespeare does not need to keep reminding us of it, for it is difficult for us to put it out of mind. From this point on, his treatment of courtship rests on the more abstract issues raised by a gender-reversed Petrarchanism, but anything serious in it is always informed by our first, comic impression of the two characters.

What makes the poem unsettling is Shakespeare's location of this muscular masculine aggression within a body depicted as an extreme of feminine fertility and lushness, both motherly and erotic. In her fears of the boar's threat to Adonis she clearly exhibits a maternal concern; she runs through the bushes "Like a milch doe, whose swelling dugs do ache, / Hasting to feed her fawn hid in some brake" (875-76). Elsewhere her concern for Adonis is rather different: "'My flesh is soft and plump'" (142), she tells him, and makes him an offer that most of Shakespeare's male readers would have found difficult to refuse:

Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry,
Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie.
Within this limit is relief enough,
Sweet bottom-grass and high delightful plain,
Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,
To shelter thee from tempest and from rain.

(233-38)

Indeed, the conventions of the erotic narrative poem allowed Shakespeare to display a frankly physical sexuality that was hardly possible on the stage: "Now doth she stroke his cheek, now doth he frown, / And 'gins to chide, but soon she stops his lips; / And kissing speaks, with lustful language broken" (45-47). Obviously, staged kissing presented actors with a problem. Robertson Davies suggests that kissing "would be performed with formal grandiosity,"¹³ presumably avoiding any impropriety between the actors, but also draining the action of any erotic element. This seems an old-fashioned view in the light of Orgel's argument that the Elizabethans felt rather less anxiety about homosexual activity than has generally been thought.¹⁴ The fact remains, however, that the plays generally limit or avoid entirely performance of erotic intimacy.

Venus and Adonis is entirely about performance of erotic intimacy, as if the poet were allowing himself to indulge in what he could not easily present on the stage. The word "kiss" or variants of it appears more frequently in *Venus and Adonis* than in any of the plays. It occurs twenty-nine times in the poem; the nearest rivals among the plays are, as we might expect, *Troilus and*

Cressida (twenty-three times, but ten of the instances are in the single scene IV. vi in which Ulysses orchestrates the serial kissing of Cressida) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (eighteen times). This erotic concentration informs everything: all Venus's speeches, from her opening offer of a thousand honey secrets and day-long kissing; the intervals in which she attempts to translate her speech into action; the emblematic copulation of the courser and the jennet; even the charged landscape in which, as Venus runs, "the bushes in the way / Some catch her by the neck, some kiss her face, / Some twine about her thigh to make her stay" (871-73). This Venus, however, is by no means the Venus of mythic convention.

Clark Hulse has demonstrated the force of Shakespeare's visual imagination in the two narrative poems which he describes as "a painter's poems, founded on a subtle understanding of the creation and interpretation of visual images."¹⁵ The visual images most familiar to Shakespeare, however, were displayed on the stage rather than the canvas. What he appears to have imagined is a staged version of Venus as a figure of erotic excess, played by a boy actor whose strapping masculinity was as apparent in his performance as Flute's beard might have been in his, and whose enthusiasm for his role caused him constantly to upstage the actor playing Adonis. The result, surely intentional, is burlesque, or perhaps more accurately, travesty, a comic treatment of material normally treated seriously. It is not entirely successful partly because of the inadequacy of the comic tone for treating the tragic death of Adonis. Shakespeare obviously knew *Hero and Leander*, and perhaps he should have emulated Marlowe by terminating his story before the catastrophe, in which case he could have left Venus comically frustrated without risking the harsher shading that this darker matter brings to his poem. Nevertheless, in generating an intense comic energy from the fine incongruity between its content and method, Shakespeare's experiment offers more than many readers have been able to discover in it.

Huron College

Notes

¹Maurice Evans, ed. *Shakespeare: The Narrative Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 9.

²A. D. Cousins, "Venus Reconsidered: The Goddess of Love in *Venus and Adonis*" *Studia Neophilologica*, 66 (1994), p. 197.

³Evans, p. 4.

⁴Robert Y. Turner, *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 172.

⁵John Buxton, *Elizabethan Taste* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1963), p. 298.

⁶Cousins, p. 199.

⁷Gordon Williams, "The Coming of Age of Shakespeare's Adonis," *The Modern Language Review*, 78 (1983), p. 770.

⁸Robert Ellrodt, "Shakespeare the Non-dramatic Poet," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), p. 45.

⁹Richard A. Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), p. 85.

¹⁰Heather Dubrow, *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987), p. 25.

¹¹Michael Jameson, "Shakespeare's Celibate Stage," in *The Seventeenth-Century Stage*, ed. G. E. Bentley (Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968), 70-93.

¹²Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1983), p. 31; Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), *passim*.

¹³Robertson Davies, *Shakespeare's Boy Actors* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1939), p. 187.

¹⁴Orgel, p. 71.

¹⁵Clark Hulse, *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981), p. 143.

The 1998 Alabama Shakespeare Festival: *Antony and Cleopatra* by Craig Barrow

While a production of *The Taming of the Shrew* set in the 1950's and a nineteenth century *Measure for Measure* were entertaining, the most significant Shakespeare production of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in 1998 was *Antony and Cleopatra*. Surprisingly, the 1998 performances of the play were the first attempted by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in its more than twenty-five year history.

Kent Thompson, the play's director, sees *Antony and Cleopatra* in his "Director's Notes" as the "terrible, mortal struggle between love and power (which in politics always seems to combine duty and ambition)."¹ This conflict seems more clear-cut than it actually is, however, for when A. C. Bradley perceptively says that "the passion that ruins Antony also exalts him,"² he alerts us to a contradiction running through the play in that the audience is led to criticize and praise Antony and sometimes Cleopatra for the love that is both their weakness and the virtue that consecrates them in the eyes of the world. Antony may dawdle when he should fight; he may let Cleopatra persuade him to fight by sea rather than by land at Actium when he has an advantage on land, and he may attempt suicide, thinking falsely that Cleopatra is dead; however, since he is sacrificing self in the name of love, his love gains stature while he loses his share of the world.

Thompson seems to feel uneasy about the apparent contradiction between the deeds of Cleopatra and Antony and their leap to immortality as lovers at the play's end. Antony, when his legacy of Roman values blocks his love, recognizes his, as Thompson says, "cowardly, unprincipled, or treasonous" actions, while Cleopatra "betrays herself, her country, and Antony throughout the play."³ Seemingly puzzled by what Shakespeare has done, Thompson declares, "It's an astonishing and daring piece of stagecraft—showing the all too human weaknesses of the central characters but changing our perceptions of them at the last moment."⁴

Frank Kermode, in his introduction to *Antony and Cleopatra* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, also explores the contradiction noted by Bradley, and comes to this creaky conclusion: "Under the pressure of historical necessity *Voluptas* must lose, whether represented by Cleopatra or Falstaff, but the defeat is not the easy and obvious

matter of a morality play."⁵ Kermode then goes on to explore the poetry, the themes and images of Shakespeare's text, as many do to resolve the contradiction. For Kermode, the identifications of Antony with Osiris and Cleopatra with Isis privilege the love that is the wrong choice in the world and the right one out of it. This seems to be a fairly common move in dealing with Shakespeare's play, in which the action seems to have one objective and the figurative language another. Janet Adelman finds the values of Cleopatra as lover and mother of Antony a source for Antony's bounty, his positive value in *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origins in Shakespeare's Plays*.⁶ Charles Whitney sees the figurative strain in notions of festive ambivalence in a recent article in *The Upstart Crow*.⁷ Perhaps the most insightful handling of the lyric values of Antony and Cleopatra, however, appears in an essay by Arnold Stein, who has this to say about the lyric and tragic modes within the play:

It [the lyric order] is indifferent to fact; but in tragedy, which is no self-contained lyric world, the lyric is not exempt from the force of fact, and must pay the price for its rightness of feeling. What we finally approve in our tragic wisdom may not be the rightness of the feeling, perhaps not even the imaginative rightness; but the right—proved and paid for, however reluctantly—of a man to feel what he feels. When we are reduced by tragedy to the basic question, we have passed righteousness (most easily), and rightness. We are left only with the right, and the question. What is man? The tragic wins over the lyric; but it is benevolent and tolerant—lessons learned from the familiar imagination of human defeat. It does not repeal the lyric, or scorn it, but allows its voice to be heard even in the final chorus, and to make its mingled claim in the memory of the listener.⁸

With such contradictions in the play itself, it is not surprising that *Antony and Cleopatra* is sometimes known as a reader's play.

As in any Alabama Shakespeare Festival production, much is handled well. The thematic juxtaposition of place is highlighted by colors, blue for Rome and green for Antony's forces; music, trumpets for Rome and sounds of the sea for Egypt and Cleopatra; and stage symbols, such as the portcullis for Rome, as if it were prison. Most of the roles were capably handled. Harry Carnahan was a cool, political Caesar, and Greg Thornton was terrific as comic, insightful, but ultimately a tragic Enobarbus.

My problem with the production was with Greta Lambert as Cleopatra and John Woodson as Mark Antony; I never believed in

their attraction for each other, let alone their love. Woodson is a capable actor, but he is not a romantic leading man. I think the production would have been much improved if Greg Thornton had played Antony and John Woodson, Enobarbus. Thornton can be a leading man, has been in many Alabama Shakespeare Festival productions, and Woodson is more than capable of playing the role of Enobarbus; he is a talented character actor. Both Woodson and Greta Lambert were more effective when they were not on stage together, when Antony was with other men, or when Cleopatra was with Charmian and Iras. Lambert was probably best in her most important scenes following the death of Antony; she showed why she is the best actress of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Seldom does one ever see a casting problem in an Alabama Shakespeare Festival production; this was one.

The costuming was generally effective, although harem costumes early on for Cleopatra, Iras, and Charmian diminish Cleopatra's significance rather than heighten it. An elevator used to hoist the dying body of Antony nearly bucked Cleopatra off of it at one point in the action, another gripe. Admittedly, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a difficult play to produce, but I think the Alabama Shakespeare Festival could have done a better job.

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Notes

¹Kent Thompson, "Director's Notes," *The Cast List*, ed. W. Todd Humphrey (Montgomery: Alabama Shakespeare Festival, 1998), p. 7.

²A. C. Bradley, *Shakespeare Tragedy* (New York: World Publishing, 1955), p. 74.

³Thompson, p. 6.

⁴Thompson, p. 6.

⁵Frank Kermode, "Antony and Cleopatra," *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 1345.

⁶Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, Hall, 1992), pp. 94-95.

⁷Charles Whitney, "Charmian's Laughter: Women, Gypsies, and Festive Ambivalence in *Antony and Cleopatra*," *The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, 14 (1994), 67-88.

⁸Arnold Stein, "The Image of Antony: Lyric and Tragic Imagination," *Essays in Shakespearean Criticism*, eds. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 575.



John Woodson as Antony and Lester Purry as Eros in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's Production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, summer, 1998.



Greta Lambert as Cleopatra and John Woodson as Antony in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's Production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, summer, 1998.