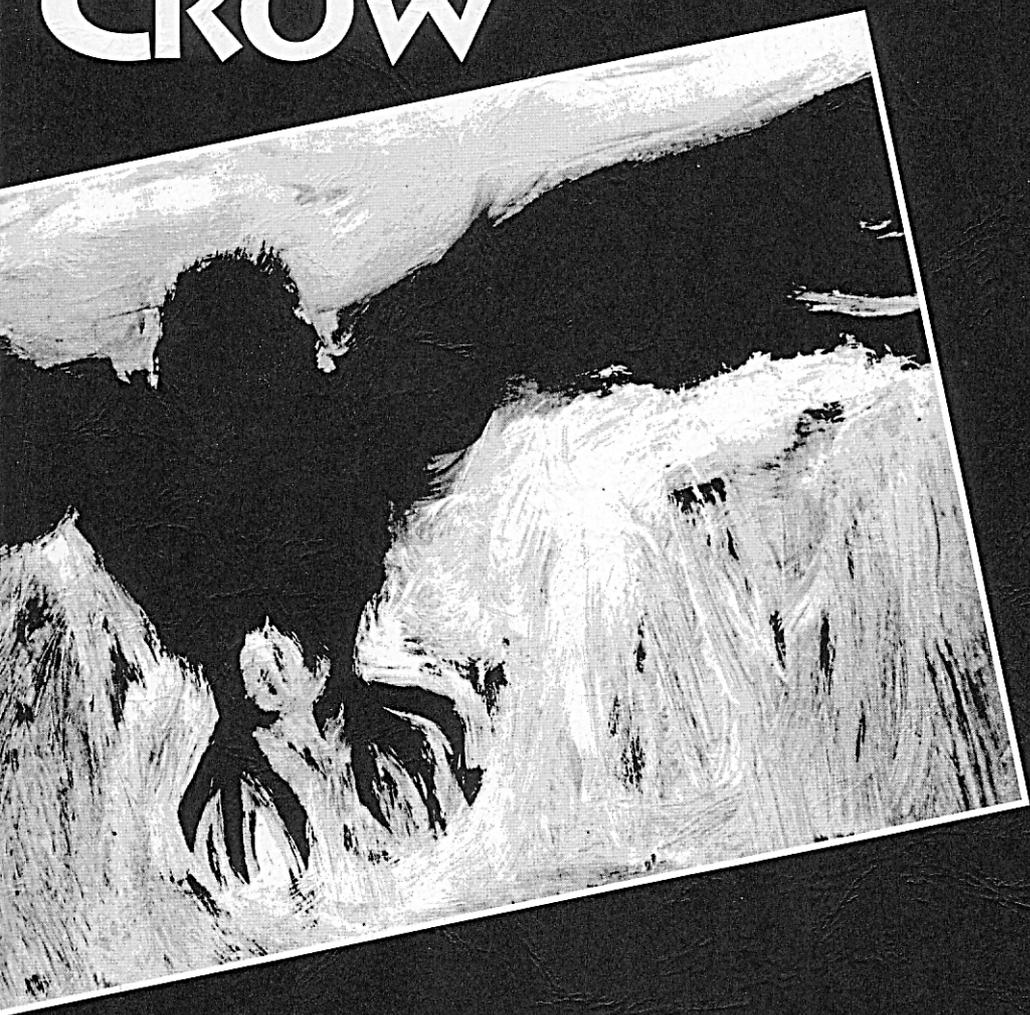


THE UPSTART CROW



A SHAKESPEARE JOURNAL
VOLUME XIX 1999



THE • VPSTART • CROW

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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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Two issues—\$14

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Performances By Chris Hassel

After a Shakespeare conference at Stratford,
The un self-conscious, normal conversation
Inside the swaying, clacking Thames Express
Is bliss itself, while in the next car down,
My colleagues, most incredibly to me,
Perform and posture still; as I observe,
I overhear a lovely British girl,
Eleven or twelve, bright-eyed, and full of joy,
Telling her father all about *Twelfth Night*—
Olivia's self-love, Malvolio,
Tricked by Maria's cleverness to wear
Preposterous garters, kiss his hands, and smile—
She got it, loved it, shared it, while I heard
From my Malvolio colleagues only naywords.
Too popular they said; we didn't go.
Of course, she cannot stay the same; even now,
Methodically, she licks the salt off one
And then another perfect Pringles Chip;
It could be merely her old way with Pringles,
But I'm afraid she's seen me watching her,
Fallen therefore, and started her performance.

Vanderbilt University

Unpalatability in the Web of *The Merchant of Venice* by Ralph Alan Cohen

Funny how the palate changes. Twenty-five years ago this Jewish man found unpalatable the Venetian treatment of Shylock the Jew; today this father of grown daughters finds unpalatable the Venetian treatment of Shylock the father of a grown daughter. Obviously, both reactions rest on some process of identification, but both reactions are also possible in the gentile and the childless. This much I know. What I believe but cannot know is that an Elizabethan audience member might also have found something unpalatable in the treatment of the Jew and of the father and that the playwright deliberately built these unpalatable moments into his play. Be that as it may, the point I wish to stress here is that these two reactions are linked. Indeed, *The Merchant of Venice* has a remarkable web of "unpalatable" features, each linked in surprising and unsurprising ways to the others. Consider some unpalatable material less frequently discussed than the play's unsavory antisemitism: a father posthumously binds his daughter's future to a lottery; a son taunts his blind father and falsely reports to him that his son is dead; a spendthrift fortune hunter asks for yet another loan from his doting friend; two new husbands boast they would have their wives dead to save the life of an old friend; two new wives pretend to their husbands that they have slept with other men; a macabre trial goes forth for purely economic reasons; a daughter steals her father's fortune and runs away with a man in a mask. In this paper I would like to look at another unpalatable moment—Portia's reaction to Morocco—and suggest ways in which it links to the treatment of Shylock the Jew, ways in which it is a part of the play's web of unpalatability. Productions that sweeten this moment alter as well the taste of Shylock's treatment.

This paper is about *The Merchant of Venice* today, about its palatability after Dreyfus, after Auschwitz, after Mississippi, after Farrakhan; but it begins with a certainty about the first production and its audiences: Certainly the play's champion is Portia.

In a world where wealth confers respect and power, her wealth is so great that she can hear the financial woes of Venice's richest merchant and ask, "What, no more?" (III. ii. 297).¹ And where her money cannot solve the problem, her initiative and her brains can.

Unpalatability in the Web of *The Merchant of Venice*

For all those reasons she is the play's primary voice and ultimate insider, its most compelling locus of identification, and the person in the play with whom an audience wants most to agree. Before we meet her, Bassanio tells us that "she is fair, and, fairer than that word, / Of wondrous virtues . . ." (I. i. 162-63), and Shakespeare even goes to the unusual length of having her praised repeatedly after we meet her. Lorenzo asks Jessica, "How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?" (III. v. 68). Jessica's reply is as exaggerated praise of one character by another as Shakespeare ever writes:

Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match,
And on the wager lay two earthly women,
And Portia one, there must be something else
Pawn'd with the other; for the poor rude world
Hath not her fellow.

(69-73)

Shakespeare does as much as a playwright can to give this character sway over the audience, to make her their champion in the play. Portia brings all of this weight to her foiling of the play's villain and in so doing appears to bring the play's unqualified endorsement to the Venetian attitudes toward Shylock and, by unhappy extension, toward Jews. This is one reason that her response to Morocco affects the web of the play—slightly perhaps for that first audience, a great deal for an audience in 2000.

Morocco's first words—"Mislike me not for my complexion" (II. i. 1)—are about his color, and no words in the play have more to do with those caskets. The oft-repeated moral of the caskets is that "all that glisters is not gold." In choosing the lead casket, Bassanio's point is that "the world is still deceived with ornament" (III. ii. 74) and his winning ticket underscores that insight with words that might as easily have been Morocco's first words to Portia:

You that choose not by the view,
Chance as fair, and choose as true!

(III. ii. 131-32)

Morocco enters the play with that very argument. Do not judge me by my exterior, he says, for my interior is a match for any man, no matter how white:

Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phoebus' fire scarce thaws the icicles,

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And let us make incision for your love,
 To prove whose blood is reddest, his or mine.
 (II. i. 4-7)

Despite the parallel with the caskets of the issue of exterior hues, I was slow to take Morocco's case for himself seriously. Having seen many a comic portrayal of Morocco, I always assumed there were deeper characteristics for which Portia and I might "mislike" Morocco. Productions frequently make him a vain buffoon, and no less an editor than Jay Halio condemns him for his "verbal pretentiousness." In fact, Halio sees Morocco's opening speech as a "self-conscious and extravagant defence of his complexion" and argues that he is "too dense to pick up Portia's hint . . . when she disdains the appeal of visual attractions."²

The problem with Halio's argument is that in her ingenious way Portia is lying to Morocco about her disdain for appearances. Before she even meets Morocco, she says explicitly how she feels about dark complexions: "If he have the condition of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me" (I. ii. 109-10). When I directed the play in 1992, I asked Tee Martin, the six-foot-tall African-American woman who was doubling as Morocco and Jessica, why her Morocco character immediately begins a defense of his dark skin. I cannot remember her exact answer, but it amounted to a scornful "Duh!" Tee's point was that a black man introducing himself to a white woman whose hand in marriage he is seeking would be quite certain what he needed to talk about first. Morocco does not need to hear Portia demonize his complexion to know how she might feel about it. His opening speech is not merely "self-conscious," as Halio claims; it is prescient; it acknowledges the situation—black man courts racist white woman—with a refreshing directness.

As to its "extravagance," Morocco first likens his skin color to the "shadowed livery of the burnished sun" (II. i. 2), a metaphor that explains his darkness by making Morocco the servant of the sun. But he must present more than a servant's credentials to the lady; he must make it clear that his connection to the sun is a close one, and so he adds that he is the sun's "neighbour and near bred" (3). In geographical terms, Morocco is not boasting here; he is merely pointing out his African origins (and continuing his explanation—in myth-making of the first order—of his skin color). Of course, his boast that he is kindred to the sun makes it possible to see him as merely arrogant, but one may also hear his claims as simply lacking the insincerity of the Western modesty trope, to

hear the same sort of joyous self-assessment we hear from Othello early on and from Cleopatra throughout. To see Morocco as a buffoon is to hear him as many heard Cassius Clay when he boasted—unpalatably—thirty-six years ago that he was “the greatest,” rather than as we now hear the echo of those words as we consider the man who would become Muhammed Ali.

And Morocco understands that differences here are cultural. He concedes that his visage can be unpalatable—

I tell thee, lady, this aspect of mine
Hath feared the valiant—

but he adds that where he comes from his looks have a *different* palatability—

... by my love, I swear
The best-regarded virgins of our clime
Have loved it too.

(II. ii. 8-11)

And he ends with a declaration that is part self-esteem and part compliment:

... I would not change this hue,
Except to steal your thoughts, my gentle queen.

(II. ii. 11-12)

What speech in Shakespeare is better suited to the situation of the speaker than Morocco's first twelve lines? What speech deals as gracefully with cultural difference? What speech balances pride and compliment as well? What speech wrestles with otherness so frankly and with so little self-pity?

Portia answers Morocco with exquisite sophistry and assures him that in her eyes he stands as “fair” as any of the previous suitors—all of whom she has previously dismissed with a witty series of nationalistic stereotypes. Perhaps Morocco is, as Halio decides, “dense,” but his reply to Portia is quick enough (a shared line), and that reply suggests an awareness of the backhandedness of her compliment—“Even for that I thank you” (22). He then proceeds to boast of what he has done and of what he would do for Portia, and here he compares himself to Hercules.³ His point is, first, that he would rather fight for Portia's love than gamble for it (and here he sounds a lot like Henry V wooing Kate) and, second, that anyone—even Hercules—can lose in games of fortune. Indeed, this view of the riskiness of the enterprise and the

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danger that the process may yield an unworthy man is precisely Portia's anxiety.

Is Morocco "dense" for choosing the golden casket? Morocco rejects the lead casket at first because "a golden mind stoops not to shows of dross," but his second thought on whether the lead casket might contain Portia's "heavenly picture" is that "'Twere damnation / To think so a base a thought" (II. vii. 49-50). Halio reports that Morocco finds the silver casket attractive, "especially as it encourages a choice based upon self-worth, of which Morocco has plenty."⁴ In fact, Morocco's consideration of the silver casket is an admirable exercise in self-examination. The inscription reads, "Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves," and Morocco, trying to weigh his "value with an even hand" (25) qualifies his sense of worth by conceding that he is measuring himself by his own estimation. In his estimation he deserves "enough," but he is quick to add that "'enough' / May not extend so far as to the lady" (28). He fights off this moment of insecurity by finding himself equal to Portia in birth, fortunes, graces, and qualities of breeding, but "more than these, in love [he does] deserve her" (34). Finally, he rejects the silver when he decides that "never so rich a gem / Was set in worse than gold."

I find all of this quite winning. Morocco chooses the gold casket, not out of vanity, but out of his admiration for Portia. In Morocco Shakespeare seems to have created Portia's equal in power, wealth, and self-assurance. To that he adds a refreshing honesty and directness. What Shakespeare gives us is a proud, accomplished African who has come to court a European woman and who must hope that she can transcend her culture and love him.

Portia gives us the unpalatable moment. At Morocco's departure she says to her attendants,

A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.

Let all of his complexion choose me so.

(78-79)

Shakespeare wants us to know that the lady doesn't want to be chosen by a man with dark skin. This information is not something that the playwright had to provide for his audience. A Russian might have come to woo—Portia had not, after all, as yet dismissed that nationality. But clearly the playwright wanted to deal with the subject of skin color. In fact, he has given us a key word for the Portia / Morocco transaction: "complexion." As we have seen, she uses it disparagingly when she first hears that Morocco has come as a suitor; in his first line he gets right to that

subject; and the word appears again in the last line of the final two scenes between them. "Mislike me not for my complexion" opens their transaction; "Let of all his complexion choose me so" closes it. Shakespeare makes it clear that Portia has judged this particular book by its cover.

I do not know how important or unpalatable this revelation might have been to Shakespeare's first audience. I rather imagine that they didn't much notice it, since Portia's final line would have seemed merely "natural."⁵ I do know from two productions of the play in the mid-nineties that today the moment is important. In the first of those two productions, the Royal Shakespeare Company cast a black woman as one of Portia's attendants. That black attendant is the one who goes to "draw the curtain," and, as she is doing so, she hears the final line of the couplet—"Let all of his complexion choose me so" and reflexively shoots a pained glance at Portia. Only after Portia has said the line does she realize her *faux pas*, but she decides to stand by it, catches her wounded attendant's glance, returns a defiant stare, and exits. The attendant, embarrassed and crestfallen, looks at the audience and follows her mistress off stage. The RSC embraced the unpalatable in that moment, and the result was a flawed heroine, a champion with a chink in her armor, no longer an unmitigated doer of good.

That same year Michael Kahn directed a production of *The Merchant of Venice* on the Folger Shakespeare Library's Elizabethan Stage in Washington, D.C. He too had cast a black woman as one of Portia's attendants. I remember bracing for the unpalatable moment. How, I wondered, would that anti-black sentiment ring on a stage in "Chocolate City"? Well, Washington's Shakespeare Theater must have wondered about that, too, and their solution was to cut the line altogether. No racism in this production—ain't nobody here but us anti-Semites.

Shakespeare's play is about insiders and outsiders; it's about who gets admitted to the club at Belmont. Portia is the ultimate insider. To win her is to win the ultimate membership. The romantic question of the play is who gets her wealth, her house, her bed. If she's "awearied of this great world" in her first scene, it must surely be because her father has left membership rules that might admit krauts, frogs, limeys, and sambos. If you were a black teenager at the Shakespeare Theater's production of *The Merchant of Venice*, you saw a production in which the Portia who brings the Hebrew to his knees had no problem at all with Africans. If you were a Jew (and I was), you saw a production in which the unpalatable treatment of Shylock by the play's cham-

tion is unmitigated by any other blemish in her character. In that production everyone but the Jew could be an insider. In the text, however, Shakespeare spreads around the unpalatable.

The consequences of this cut are similar to the consequences of casting black people in parts other than Morocco. Although Shakespeare undoubtedly cast a white man as Morocco and had him put on blackface of some sort which he could remove to play his other roles, today no director wants to use that approach. Productions either play Morocco as someone whose complexion does not need the apologia Shakespeare wrote for it, or they cast a black actor in the role. The problem with this solution is that Morocco is on stage for a total of seven minutes, and thus the only economical thing to do is to cast the black actor in other roles. With respect to insiders and outsiders and the distribution of unpalatability, however, all the other male roles are problematic. Any other part obscures the unpalatable racial prejudice of Portia (and thus heightens the unpalatability of the endorsement she gives the treatment of Jews).

To double cast the actor playing Morocco as any of the insiders—Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salerio, Solanio or the Duke—restricts the rejection of otherness to Jews, and contradicts the racism in the play. What do we make of Jessica's reminder to Gobbo that he must answer "the getting up of the negro's belly" (III. v. 31) if Gobbo is played by a black actor? How do we hear Shylock's unexpected mention of the Venetians' slaves?

You have among you many a purchased slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts
Because you bought them. Shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?

(IV. i. 89-93)

Are we to imagine that these slaves were African? How, then, does Shylock make this point to a Duke played by a black actor? How does the argument fare with a black Antonio looking on? Can Portia marry a black Bassanio after she has so clearly expressed her dislike for that complexion? Can Nerissa accept the proposal of a black Gratiano after she has heard her mistress on the subject of marrying Africans? Can Jessica taunt Gobbo about having made a black woman pregnant if she is married to a black Lorenzo?

My troupe, the Shenandoah Shakespeare Express, is committed to colorblind casting. In 1990 we cast a black actor (Eric

Quander) as Caesar. Occasionally someone uncomfortable with that choice would ask me why I cast a black man in a role we know was not black. My answer was that we wanted someone who looked like Julius Caesar, but when we couldn't find a white, five foot, eight inch, fifty-two-year-old balding Roman man to play the part, we decided just to go with a good actor and have the audience make believe.

The SSE has had African-American actors play Ophelia, Laertes, Banquo, Oberon, Orsino, Feste, Toby Belch. That is fine casting because those parts are in plays that are not about the otherness of Africans. *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* are. In 1999, we mounted a production of *The Merchant of Venice* in which we have the black actor playing Morocco double as Solanio. That is bad casting. Caught in the play's web of the unpalatable, our casting forces us to have our white Salerio—in the presence of our black Solanio—reply to Shylock's statement that Jessica is his flesh and blood: "There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory" (III. i. 33-34). The actor playing Salerio tries to make the moment work by pointing jokingly to his friend Solanio's skin as he says "jet," but to do so is to ignore the clear implication that it is Shylock who is "black" and his daughter white. Clearly a pejorative in the text, "jet" must suddenly become an honorific.

Shylock's famous plea follows this moment. Shakespeare's Shylock first gave that speech as the only outsider on the stage. In the current SSE production, a black man looks on while Shylock asks,

Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?

(III. i. 49-54)

For modern audiences, the presence during that speech of a black Solanio, who represents the establishment, partially exonerates Venetian society. The audience sees before them a culture that (unlike its champion Portia) embraces people of Morocco's complexion, and that tolerance for diversity blunts Shylock's indictment of the establishment's inability to sympathize with otherness and reduces the meaning of his speech to a special plea for Jews.

We wanted the good black actor (Jay Pringle) who plays Solanio to be in our troupe. We needed him for his Morocco, for

his fine Banquo and for his Jasper (in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*), and it made good economic sense to use him for another role in *The Merchant of Venice*. However, it made bad sense of the play, and it disturbed Shakespeare's web.

Today that web of nuance reflects four more centuries of history, the last of which has featured prominently the plight of Jews and of African descendants. This history permanently seasons the unpalatable in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. No Elizabethan could have heard Portia's prejudice against Morocco with ears attuned to the views of Martin Luther King; no Elizabethan could have seen Antonio threaten to spit on and kick a Jew in the street with eyes accustomed to footage of Auschwitz. To assume that Shakespeare and his audience saw these two outsider groups as we do would be foolish. We can only muse at the coincidence that finds the mistreatment of both these groups in the web of unpalatable themes in *The Merchant of Venice*.

James Madison University and Shenandoah Shakespeare

Notes

¹This paper was delivered originally as a lecture for the eighth annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival at Clemson University. All citations are to *The Norton Shakespeare: Based on the Oxford Edition*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997).

²*The Merchant of Venice*, Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford, 1993), p. 34.

³Halio points out that in this regard Morocco "tends to confuse things." He is not the only admirable character in Shakespeare who rearranges history and myth.

⁴Halio, p. 34.

⁵I remember a discussion seven years ago in one of my classes in which several white students were shocked with the implication that a match between Portia and Morocco would have been acceptable. One woman argued vehemently that not wanting to marry a black man did not make Portia a racist, that it was merely a matter of taste, like not wanting to marry a red-haired man or a bald man.

Democratizing the Bard: Shakespeare, Folk Art, and Ragtime Music by Robert Sawyer

Shakespeare

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!

.....

All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

(1844)¹

Matthew Arnold's mid-Victorian poem illustrates one idolatrous response to Shakespeare's work, and the poem also demonstrates how writers may respond textually to Shakespeare's overwhelming presence. More importantly, Arnold's poem conjures up a crucial image in the concluding line, where the poet refers to Shakespeare's "victorious brow." This high forehead, whether physically accurate or not, has come to dominate images of Shakespeare, including the Trinity bust at Stratford and the frontispiece for the First Folio (Figure 1). For some, this high forehead suggests a superior intelligence or an exceptional ability. For example, at about the same time as the composition of Arnold's poem, at least one popular book on phrenology employed Shakespeare's portrait to equate a "high brow" with intellectual distinction (Figure 2). This notion finally found its way into the language, and as Lawrence Levine points out, the term "highbrow" was coined in the 1880's "to describe intellectual or aesthetic superiority."² Today the OED, our official arbiter of definitions, describes a "highbrow" as a "person of superior intellectual attainment or interests: occas. with derisive implication of conscious superiority to ordinary human standards."³ Because Shakespeare is so often employed as a symbol of highbrow art and "conscious superiority," the tensions inherent in popular or "lowbrow" art that borrow his image or words are particularly intriguing, whether the artists are appropriating Shakespeare because of his status, or mocking Shakespeare to undermine his cultural authority. What I will examine are representations of Shakespeare in two distinctly American, allegedly lowbrow genres, folk art and ragtime music, arguing that the use of Shakespeare's image in these forms democratizes the Bard by breaking down the hierarchal distinctions between "high" and "low" art.

I. "Big Guys"

Howard Finster's folk art works have become icons of late 20th-century American art. They are seen in ads, duplicated in magazines, and reproduced on album covers. Finster, like Arnold's Shakespeare, is also a "self-schooled, self-scanned" artist, whose origins, like Shakespeare's, are rather humble, and Finster recently told me that he quit school after the sixth grade. Further, like Shakespeare's productions, Finster's works now carry enormous cultural capital. His paintings were featured for the first time in a *Life* magazine article in 1980; in 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts granted Finster a Visual Artist Fellowship in Sculpture.

Today, Finster's works are avidly collected by museums as well as sought out by individual collectors. His works have been displayed at The Library of Congress (1978), the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American Art (1981), the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York (1983), and The High Museum of Art in Atlanta (1988). He is also represented in permanent collections at the National Museum and the Library of Congress, as well as others. In 1984, Finster was chosen to represent the United States at the Venice Biennial in Italy.

The tension between high art and low art, in addition to Finster's lack of training, can be seen in something as simple as Finster's medium, as he fashions his works with extremely "low-brow" materials. For example, his portraits of Shakespeare are reproduced on plywood; other works are painted on tin scraps, discarded soda bottles, and even large stones. Moreover, he seriously claims to create his works using "the best bicycle paint available."⁴

Howard's paintings of Shakespeare are a part of a series of images depicting various cultural icons: Elvis Presley, Henry Ford, the Mona Lisa, and even Santa Claus. When I interviewed the Rev. Finster, he told me he included Shakespeare in this series because he was a "great writer."⁵ When asked about the picture of Shakespeare from which he drew, he explained that on a visit to the Library of Congress when his own works were being featured, the curator took him into the special collection vault where he saw pictures of Shakespeare. Howard also said he has come across pictures of Shakespeare in the encyclopedia, and he claims he "has seen him on T.V. once in awhile."⁶ When I asked him to compare Elvis to Shakespeare, he thought a moment and declared: "Elvis was a stimilater (sic) of the youth," while

"Shakespeare was more for everybody, I reckon."⁷ Finally, the representations in his sequence—Elvis, Henry Ford, et al., Finster calls, "all big guys."⁸ His paintings of Shakespeare, however, clearly assert the Bard's prestige over the other people in the series. Of all the cultural icons, it is only Shakespeare who gets the prestigious treatment, clothed in a slick, polyester-looking suit, anchored by cuffed pants, and topped by a high-mounting collar. Significantly, the portrait is crowned by Shakespeare's "victorious brow" (Figure 3). All of these details appear to testify to Shakespeare's cultural status. Yet, by being included in this strange melange of popular and "highbrow" subjects, Finster's images tend to democratize Shakespeare, blurring the distinctions between cultural categories, making Shakespeare truly "more for everybody."

A second image of Shakespeare that dismantles the distinction between popular and "high" art is by Howard's son, Roy, another successful folk artist (Figure 4). Notice the figure's highbrow, which is similar to the First Folio, and the gold of the initials and on the collar intended to grant the painting additional prestige. The tackiness of dime store glitter for the gold touches, however, undermines any serious attempt at elitism. Moreover, the writing on the piece also seems to suggest a tension between highbrow and lowbrow. The dates, for example, give the painting status as it proves that Shakespeare has become a cultural artifact, not a living person but a dead literary icon. The description "poet" and "author" also suggest cultural authority. The title "writer," however, seems to be mentioned as a separate category, and may undercut the highbrow nature of the other descriptive words. The division of Shakespeare's name also seems to subvert any preconceived notion of Shakespeare's authority (or any preconceived idea about how much space was needed to write the name). Finally, the pseudo-Elizabethan ruff contrasts nicely with the polyester-looking sleeves.

Once again, by being assimilated into a distinctly American art form, Shakespeare's image is radically democratized. Interestingly, by reproducing Shakespeare's image because he is a "big guy," both Finsters produce an interesting transformation of Shakespeare's image by blurring the visual boundaries between high art and low art.

II. "Most intelligent, very elegant"

A second area of Shakespearean appropriation which breaks down hierarchal distinctions between high art and popular art

involves another indigenous American genre, ragtime music. At approximately the same time as Arnold was writing his poem "Shakespeare," many "highbrow" European musicians were also appropriating Shakespeare's works as material for their compositions. Only four years after Arnold's poem was completed, for example, Verdi began composing a number of operas based on Shakespeare, including *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and others. In France in 1839, Berlioz composed *Romeo and Juliet*; in 1862 he composed the last of many works borrowed from Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Beatrice et Benedict*. Tchaikovsky, nineteenth-century Russia's most distinguished composer, also appropriated Shakespeare's plays. Indeed, as Gary Taylor has pointed out, the "playwright inspired Tchaikovsky to compose symphonic fantasies, overtures, and incidental music" based on Shakespeare's works.⁹ These composers represent many different countries, demonstrating Shakespeare's "highbrow" internationalization as these composers borrow Shakespeare's works to raise their own cultural status. In America, however, some musical appropriations of Shakespeare were taking a drastically different form than those in Europe.

Specifically, I will argue that the discordant strains of popular American culture, as represented by ragtime music, can be harmonized with high culture, as represented by allusions to Shakespeare in the song "That Shakespearian Rag." In this song, we hear apparent discord as the popular ragtime beats fight against the high culture currency represented by the references to Shakespeare. I believe, however, that this appropriation of Shakespeare, like Finster's rough magic, creates a significant bridge between high and popular culture, democratizing the bard in the process.

The origins of ragtime, although distantly related to the so-called "cake-walks" held on plantations of the South, can be traced to what was commonly called the "coon song." Edward Berlin describes early ragtime as a "Negro dialect song frequently, but not always, of an offensively denigrating nature."¹⁰ Although the coon song existed previously in the American minstrel and vaudeville traditions, in the 1890's it acquired the label of "ragtime."

Central to the early understanding of ragtime was syncopation, the distorted beat featured in the songs. The question "What is ragtime?" was asked throughout the period, and almost without exception explanations included a statement about syncopation. In *Musician* magazine of November 1901, A. J. Goodrich, a respected theorist and academician, wrote, "Rag-time is merely a

common form of syncopation in which the rhythm is distorted in order to produce a more or less ragged, hysterical effect."¹¹ Paul Whiteman, proponent of jazz and self-proclaimed "King of Jazz," observed that "[s]trictly speaking, to rag a tune means to destroy its rhythm and tempo and substitute for the 2-4 or 4-4 time a syncopated rhythm."¹² Thus, the term "rag" serves as a noun, "identifying a type of music; a verb referring to the process of syncopation; and an adjective modifying 'time', that is in 'ragged time.'"¹³ This syncopated beat, however, was thought by many to overexcite the body, appealing to "lowbrow" physical sensations rather than "highbrow" mental ones.

While some debate exists over the origins of the music and its name, there is no question about the controversy it generated from its inception just prior to the turn of the century, until its demise around 1917. The timing of its emergence was a key to its widespread popularity as the "1890's coincided with new technological means of mass music communication—recordings and piano rolls—and a vastly expanded publishing industry."¹⁴ The very possibility of mass dissemination created widespread popularity, making ragtime music available to almost anyone willing to listen to it. Due to these innovations it was now conceivable to "introduce trends on a nationwide basis, creating a degree of national homogeneity."¹⁵ This era was the first of coast-to-coast fads, another social construction that crosses social barriers, and ragtime was one of the first to benefit from this new possibility.

Although the controversy over ragtime manifested itself in many ways, the central conflict took place between proponents of high art and defenders of popular culture. (A similar controversy sometimes surrounds "high" art and folk art even today.) Many cultural leaders in America looked on with horror as ragtime, the first example of the new musical technology, swept the nation. These leaders had hoped that the country's musical life would develop along the traditional lines of European taste, that is composers such as Verdi and Tchaikovsky. Instead, they observed the invasion of a music that derived not from the Old World of Europe but instead from "darkest" Africa, a music that represented a threat to their notions of "highbrow" musical taste. They expressed this overt racism in the way they phrased the problem. America's new music represented for them not the "civilization and spiritual nobility of European art but its very antithesis—the sensual depravity of African savagery, embodied in the despised American Negro."¹⁶

The attack on ragtime was strikingly similar to assaults on other popular or "lowbrow" music forms such as the early cen-

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sure of rock and roll and the more recent attacks on rap music. Indeed, many articles condemned ragtime as an "enemy of true art and 'good music.'"¹⁷ Numerous critics, in fact, prophesied its early doom: "Rag-time has passed the zenith of its popularity, musicians say, and they are now anxious to lay out the corpse," the *American Musician* claimed in 1901.¹⁸ The more determined censors, however, tried to ban it all together. This step was actually attempted by the American Federation of Musicians at the National Meeting in 1901. The musicians "swore to play no ragtime, and to do all in their power to counteract the pernicious influence exerted by . . . the negro school."¹⁹ Although these bans were nearly impossible to enforce, the action did not prevent others from attempting a more local suppression. The "Commissioner of Docks in NYC, concerned about educating 'the popular taste,' excluded ragtime from the free summer pier concerts, and the Superintendent of Vocation Schools in NY similarly banned ragtime from school music-programs."²⁰ Many complained that ragtime was making an assault on traditional morality; in 1913, one writer argued that the music was "symbolic of the primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the negro type," and that through its influence, "America is falling prey to the collective soul of the negro."²¹

Ragtime, however, began to blur the distinction between high culture and popular culture, as some traditional representatives of high musical taste, as well as members of some royalty, even began to champion the new form. Composer-bandmaster John Philip Sousa reported that European royalty liked ragtime: "King Edward VII of Great Britain, William of Prussia, German Emperor, and Nicholas II, Czar of All the Russias, have accorded it their approval, [and] confess that they like it."²² Moreover, Igor Stravinsky diligently acquired many pieces of the music. In a *New York Tribune* article, Stravinsky explained ragtime's attraction:

I know little about American music except that of the music halls, but I consider that unrivaled. It is veritable art, and I never can get enough of it to satisfy me. I am convinced of the absolute truth of utterance in that form of American art.²³

Eventually, Stravinsky would go on to write a score entitled "Ragtime For Eleven Pieces."

One of the more interesting rags of the early twentieth century was entitled "That Shakespearian Rag," and the popularity of the song is evidenced by its inclusion on the Top Ten chart in the summer of 1912. A *Variety* advertisement for July 19, 1912,

claims, "If you want a song that can be acted as well as sung send for this big surprise hit" (Figure 5). It was also during this time, according to my interview with Hugh Kenner, that T. S. Eliot would have heard the song while attending Harvard.²⁴ Indeed, Eliot envisioned the song's potential for creating a bridge between high culture and popular culture, when he included a reference to it in *The Waste Land*.

The song's lyrics refer to "Bill Shakespeare" and contain the less than memorable lines "As Soon 'as you like it,' Brutus / We'll play a rag today." In addition the chorus reads:

That Shakespearian rag,—
Most intelligent, very elegant,
That old classical drag,
Has the proper stuff, the line "Lay on Macduff,"
Desdemona was the colored pet,
Romeo loved his Juliet—
And they were some lovers, you can bet, and yet,
I know if they were here today,
They'd Grizzly Bear in a diff'rent way,
And you'd hear old Hamlet say,
"To be or not to be,"
That Shakespearian Rag.

In the lyrics, we hear echoes of many Shakespearean works, including *Richard III*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, and *As You Like It*. Moreover, while the song seems to focus on the tragic relationships represented by the Desdemona/Othello, Romeo/Juliet, Hamlet/Ophelia pairings, that solemnity is undermined by the off-handed allusions to "Bill Shakespeare." Also, phrases such as "the colored pet" or "you can bet" mock anyone who takes the tragedies too seriously. Further, the sense of the clash between high culture and pop culture is apparent as the Shakespearean allusions fight to be heard over the syncopated beat. In addition, there is a potential tension or discord between the song's references to the Elizabethan past, while couples frantically participated in faddish dance steps such as the Grizzly Bear, the Fox Trot, the Tiger Rag, and the Ostrich Walk. Indeed, the lyrics even call attention to the possible discord by mentioning the "high-browed rhymes" of Shakespeare in the first stanza and the "Grizzly Bear" reference repeated in the chorus. Yet the song successfully fuses the high culture of the Shakespearean references with popular culture represented by the syncopated beat of ragtime, adding complexity to the staid "highbrow" Shakespeare by combining the old and new, the past and present, the artistic and the common, in short, highbrow and lowbrow.

III. "And in the end . . ."

A quarter of a century after Matthew Arnold composed his poem on Shakespeare and some twenty years before the advent of ragtime, Arnold turned his attention to social criticism in "Culture and Anarchy" (1869). This work seems to have solidified the distinctions between popular culture, on the one hand, and the "touchstones" of high culture such as Shakespeare on the other. More importantly, as Levine notes, "the Arnold important to America was not Arnold the critic, Arnold the poet, Arnold the religious thinker, but Arnold the Apostle of Culture," and Arnold's tour of America in the 1880's to preach the "gospel" of culture was well received.²⁵

Interestingly, however, one of Arnold's central "highbrow" symbols, Shakespeare, constantly recurs in the struggle between highbrow and lowbrow in twentieth-century American art. From the musical fads of the early part of the century, to the folk art vogue at the close, this tension seems especially apparent, as American pluralistic sympathies tend to democratize the Anglo bard, either by unintentionally grouping him with other visual pop icons or by mocking his cultural status in song. Yet, I believe these appropriations of Shakespeare represent a significant bridge between high and popular culture, particularly if we think in terms of a presence of something additional rather than an absence. In other words, popular culture Shakespeare represents the potential for more complexity because it explores and examines both sides of the cultural fence that allegedly separates highbrow and lowbrow art.

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Notes

¹Matthew Arnold, "Shakespeare," *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 26. Arnold was the most important proponent of "culture" in England and America in the nineteenth century.

²Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Press, 1988), p. 221. Figure 2 is from Levine, p. 232.

³*Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Ed. 12 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Univ. Press, 1989), vol. 7, p. 222.

⁴Chuck and Jan Rosenak, *Museum of American Folk Art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Art and Artists* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1990), p. 123.

⁵Howard Finster, telephone interview with author, 15 August 1997.

⁶Finster.

⁷Finster.

⁸Finster.

⁹Gary Taylor, *Reinventing Shakespeare: A Cultural History from the Restoration to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), p. 168.

¹⁰Edward Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1980), p. 5.

¹¹A. J. Goodrich, "Syncopated Rhythm vs. 'Rag-Time,'" *Musician*, 6 (November 1901), p. 336.

¹²Paul Whiteman, "'To Jazz' or 'To Rag,'" *Literary Digest* (6 May 1922), p. 37.

¹³Berlin, p. 12.

¹⁴Berlin, p. 32.

¹⁵Berlin, p. 32.

¹⁶Berlin, p. 32.

¹⁷Berlin, p. 40.

¹⁸"War on Ragtime," *American Musician*, 5 (July 1901), p. 4.

¹⁹Berlin, p. 41.

²⁰Berlin, p. 42.

²¹Kenilworth, Walter Winston, "Demoralizing Rag Time Music," *Music Courier*, 66 (28 May 1913), 22-23.

²²*New York Times*, 10 Oct. 1903, p. 6.

²³*New York Tribune*, 16 Jan. 1916, sec. 5, p.3.

²⁴Hugh Kenner, interview with author, 19 Sept. 1994.

²⁵B. R. MacElderry, "Eliot's Shakespeherian Rag," *American Quarterly*, 9 (1957), p. 185.

²⁶Levine, p. 223.

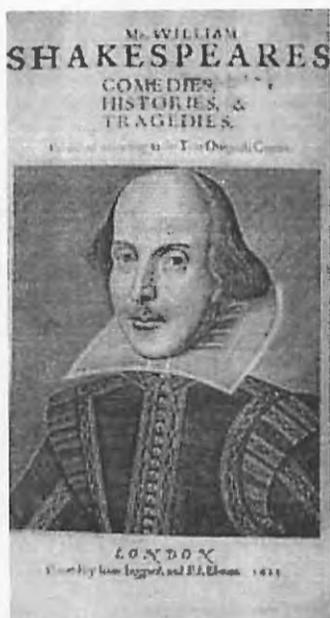


Figure 1. Frontispiece For First Folio.

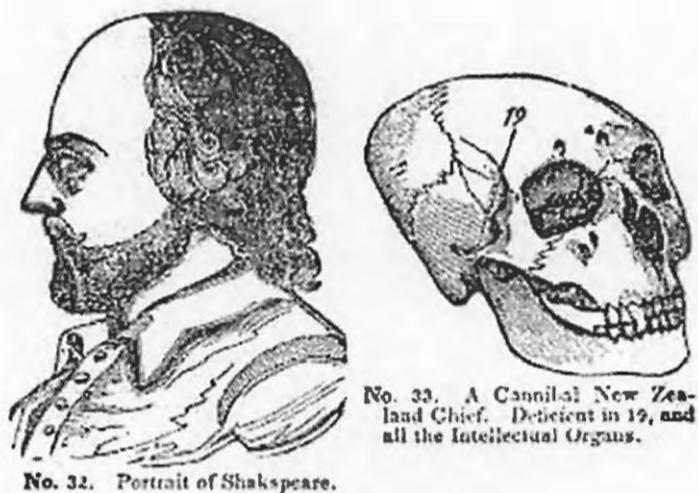


Figure 2. Partial Comparison of Shakespeare and a "Cannibal" from Coombs *Popular Phrenology*, 1865.



Figure 3. Howard Finster's *Shakespeare*.



Figure 4. Roy Finster's *Shakespeare*.



Figure 5. *Variety* Ad, July 19, 1912.

Lettering the Law: The Printed Word in Early Modern Legal Practice by Joseph Lenz

When Autolycus declares that he loves “a ballad in print, a life, for then we know they are true,”¹ he is, of course, making a joke, playing on the ready credence we give to the written word over that which is merely rumored or reported orally, even when that written word describes a woman who was turned into a fish. While Autolycus’ joke may strike us as obvious, for our skeptical age knows not to believe everything we read, the novelty of print lent peculiar power to the book in Shakespeare’s age. More than merely being believed for what they said, books were popularly credited for what they could do. As David Cressy reports, books, especially Bibles, could ward off evil spirits, soothe restless children, conjure dreams of future lovers, stop bullets, and cure illness.² Books appear with some frequency among lists of stolen items, despite having poor resale value. And printed ballads, like the one Autolycus mocks, were good sellers, particularly among the illiterate. Churchgoers regularly heard preachers sermonize about the advantages, both spiritual and material, of literacy.³ In a society in which literacy was largely limited to the privileged or professional classes, the mere possession of a book gave (or was assumed to give) credibility one might not otherwise have. This credibility derived, at least in part, from the “benefit of clergy,” a medieval exemption from civil prosecution given to the literate on the assumption that, if they could read, they must be clergy and hence subject to ecclesiastical courts. If one did not possess literacy, at least one might possess the book, and hence the appearance of literacy.

Yet, it would be a mistake to conclude that this credence was the result of ignorant superstition. Even in educated circles, like that of the legal profession, the written—more precisely, the *printed*—word carried more weight, more potency, more credibility, and more danger than the spoken word. Throughout the sixteenth century the treason statutes, for instance, consistently differentiated between spoken seditious speech (punishable only after the second or third offence) and written seditious speech (punishable after the first offence). Likewise, it was during this period that the law began to develop a distinction between written (libel) and verbal (slander) defamation and regarded libel as the more serious of the two. The superstitious credulity toward print, mocked by

Autolycus, and the legal legitimacy of print, evident in changes in the law, both belong to the evolutionary shift from oral to print culture that takes place from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.

In particular, I am interested in the institutionalization of a social attitude toward print, the granting of a privileged status that makes the printed word more potent, less corruptible, and more credible than the spoken word. To demonstrate this process—which takes place over a long period of time and in any number of social, political, and religious institutions—I will concentrate on how print altered the practice of law and the law itself. This essay will trace how two legal practices, the development of court reporting and the evolution of defamation law, give increased legitimacy to the “truth” of print. This distinction between the written and the verbal and the recognized credibility of the “published” parallels and contributes to the new legitimacy of drama, as it moves from performance (staged report) to printed text.

I. The Law Of The Letter

In *From Memory to Written Record*, Michael Clanchy describes the trial of a knight accused of rape in 1300. The knight, one Hugh, wanted to challenge some of his jurors for prejudice against him, and was provided with the list of challenges, written in the proper form. However, Hugh could not read, nor was he allowed simply to submit the list to the court, which left him in a quandary about what to do:

Hugh stood silent and confused, but the judge told him not to be discomforted and that now was the time to speak. He turned to Nicholas of Leicester, Hugh’s counsel, and asked, “Do you wish to read Sir Hugh’s challenges?” Nicholas replied, “Yes, my lord, if I may have his list which he has in his hands.” Having been allowed the list, Nicholas then asked: “My lord, the challenges here are named against numerous persons, do you wish me to read them publicly?” The judge, “No, no! You are to read them to the prisoner secretly, because they must be taken to come from his mouth.” Prompted by his counsel, Hugh duly made the challenges and was acquitted.⁴

This charade demonstrates, on the one hand, the extent to which the fourteenth century courts had come to depend upon the written (the challenges had to be delivered in the proper form).

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Yet it shows, at the same time, a distrust of the written, a belief that the spoken word (even when prompted) is more credible. Just two hundred years prior to the superstitious powers accredited to the printed book that Cressy describes, the written word had little or no standing.

During the next two centuries, this distrust of documentary evidence is gradually transformed. In early English courts, in order for a trial to go forward, documentary evidence—wills, deeds, leases, and so on—had to be produced for court inspection and be attested to (orally, not by signature) by accompanying witnesses. Thus, in a dispute, for instance, about a will, both the will and the witnesses to testify that this indeed was the will of “Richard Roe” had to appear in court; without such witnesses the document itself meant nothing, and the case could not proceed. In 1318, however, the law was altered (12 Edward II, st. I c. 2.), requiring that the witnesses had to be summoned, but that the case could go forward if they did not appear. By 1472 the witnesses, attested to by their mark or signature, did not have to be summoned unless they were requested by the court or by one of the litigants. By the end of the sixteenth century the practice of summoning the witnesses had become obsolete: “Such process against witnesses is vanished,” declared Coke in his commentary upon Littleton.⁵ Thus, gradually, the documents are allowed to speak for themselves, displacing the need for anyone to speak for them.

A similar displacement of the spoken by the written occurs in the practice of pleading (the statement of guilt or innocence and the supporting evidence for that plea—in effect, what we might refer to as a brief). It was English court custom to present pleas orally. However, during the reign of Edward IV, a period coincident with the appearance of the printing press and with the growing validity of documentary evidence, the submission of written pleas first came into use.⁶ Within seventy years, the transition from oral pleading to written pleading was complete. While the substitution of the oral plea with the written plea seems merely to be a technical change, it heralded a number of major developments in English legal history. To begin with, the advent of “paper pleading” emphasized the issues of law already formulated.⁷ Where oral pleading was restricted to “just the facts,” written pleadings included citation to previous relevant cases.⁸ The lawyer who could invoke previous decisions had the clear advantage over the lawyer who could not; just as importantly, the lawyer who could follow the proper form for the plea (the rules governing such things as the proper language were quite precise)

likewise had the advantage. The written pleadings allowed for both. Moreover, the citation of precedent increased the authority of and dependency upon the written court record, leading to a second major development: the appearance of the court reports.

Initially the court record did not amount to much. For centuries legal proceedings were recorded in plea rolls and yearbooks, compilations of decisions made in the various courts during the three annual terms (Michaelmas, Easter, Trinity). Like the oral pleadings, the yearbooks contained the mere facts: the nature of the dispute, the names of the litigants, and the judgment reached. Essentially, barristers needed to rely on their memories or their personal notebooks made while observing cases (a standard part of their legal education) for information ranging from precedent to punishment. These notebooks, together with the more fully argued written pleas, contributed to the development of the law reports, which appeared early in the reign of Henry VIII and which, by the 1530's, had completely replaced the yearbooks. The reports differed from yearbooks in two major respects. Where the yearbooks were comprehensive and factual, the reports were selective, limited to landmark cases or, more often, to those cases the reporter happened to take note of, and interpretive, including the arguments made in the case and commentary upon those arguments and sometimes upon the decision made. At first, there were two kinds of law reports. One, done in the traditional yearbook style, was objective, relatively impersonal, and clearly designed for other barristers, the work of junior, anonymous utter-barristers. The other was more subjective and idiosyncratic, intended for a restricted readership, the product of mature, acknowledged practitioners.⁹ Plowden, for instance, designed his *Commentaries* for his colleagues, carefully selecting a small number of cases (sixty-seven from a thirty year career) but commenting thoroughly on each case, including the names of the parties, the date of argument, the tribunal concerned, the term, the nature of the arguments, and the final decision. Understandably, it was the second kind of report that carried more authority, partly because there was an "author" to identify, partly because that author was a known and respected lawyer or judge, and partly because the practice of manuscript circulation and, eventually, print, reflexively certified the authority of the reporter. Indeed, the manner in which the printed reports gained immediate validity neatly illustrates Foucault's theory of authorship and authority.¹⁰ Abbott contends that, from 1585-1600, there were over forty lawyers who were reporters, separate from copiers, compilers, and collectors; yet, despite the existence of these

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multiple manuscript reports, barristers tended to cite only the printed reports.¹¹ Until the reports of Edward Coke, this meant citation only to Edmund Plowden, the first to have his reports published in his lifetime, and to James Dyer, whose reports were published posthumously.

Coke, only the second reporter to publish in his own lifetime, seems to have been acutely aware of the potency of print and to the immediate influence he could exert over the law, not only in its practice, but also in public perception of it. Indeed, his definition of the function of a report seems more directed at lay readers than at lawyers:

A substantiall and compendious report of a case rightly adjudged both produce three notable effects, first it openeth the understanding of the reader and of the hearer, secondly, it breaketh through the difficulties, and thirdly it bringeth home to the hand of the studious varietie of pleasure and profit; I say it doth set open the windows of the law to let in that gladsome light whereby the right reason of the rule (the beautie of the law) may be clearly discerned, it breaketh the thicke and hard shell, whereby with pleasure and ease the sweetnesse of the kernell may be sensibly tasted, and adorneth with varietie of fruits both pleasant and profitable, the store-house of those by whom they were never planted nor watered.¹²

For Coke, who no doubt profited from the sales of his many reports, the law, or at least his report of it, becomes a product for consumption, designed to be attractive in both taste and appearance. The reporter is not only literate, but *literary*, creating documents “both pleasant and profitable,” echoing Sidney’s dictum that poetry must both teach and delight. The flood of publications that issues from Coke—the thirteen reports, the four *Institutes*, the *Commentaries Upon Littleton*—testify to his desire to control both the course of the law and his place as the author of that course.¹³ Before Coke there is, as one writer put it, “a tangle of wandering and masterless reports,” circulating manuscripts that are error-prone and unauthoritative; after Coke, there is Coke: more than a name, but a body of knowledge to be reckoned with.

So successful was he, that in 1631, at the end of Coke’s career as lawyer, as Attorney General, as Chief Justice, and as an opposition leader in Parliament, Charles I felt obligated to command the Lord Keeper to stop the publication of the Fourth Institute, because Coke “is held too great an oracle amongst the people, and

they may be misled by anything that carries such an authority as all things do that he either speaks or writes."¹⁴ In attributing oracular powers to Coke, Charles reacts as Walter Ong argues most people in a newly literate society react:

Like the oracle or prophet, the book relays an utterance from a source, the one who really "said" or wrote the book. The author might be challenged if only he or she could be reached, but the author cannot be reached in any book. There is no way directly to refute a text. After absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before. This is one reason why "the book says" is popularly tantamount to "it is true."¹⁵

It is also the reason that sedition laws are much harsher on those who print rather than speak their discontent. Books, pamphlets, broadsides, and letters circulate freely, they cannot be refuted, and, because they are in print, they are true. Such acceptance is no less common among the learned than it is among the general population. Thirty years after Charles I tried to suppress Coke's work, William Prynne, the scourge of the theater, complained of his difficulty in correcting a few of the "sundry misquotations, mistakes of record" in the Fourth Institute of "that Eminent Patron and Pillar of the Common Law, Sir Edward Cooke . . . whose quotations (through too much credulity or supinesse) are generally received, relyed on by a mere implicit faith, as Infallible Oracles, not only by most young students and Professors, but most ancient Sages of the Law in their Argument and Resolutions."¹⁶

So Coke becomes an oracle, a seer and publisher of the truth. He takes "the advancement of truth" as his intent and, "avoyding obscurity and novelty that may be in a legal method and in the lawyers dialect,"¹⁷ he fashions that truth into a material object, a tasty and attractive morsel, that unlike "obscurity" can be easily swallowed. This is not to suggest that Coke in any way popularized the law, writing how-to's for amateur or would-be lawyers. Far from it. To begin with, the reports are written in Law French, an antique corruption of Old French comprehensible chiefly to legal professionals—what Walter Ong would call a "learned language," a language of power and authority because it is a written (not a natively spoken) language, employed only by the literate.¹⁸ More important, his intent was to professionalize the law, to systemize it, to make it responsive to its own history and its own dictates, independent of the inconstancy of the crown, the whims of the people, and the "misinterpretation and inept prac-

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“*tice*” of its lawyers. By bonding the law to the letter, he transcribes those dictates, preserving them, elucidating them, resurrecting them to haunt or to help those who come after.

The point here is not that Coke becomes a local hero, an oracle, but that he participates in a process by which the common law is transformed from a largely accidental and incidental compilation of cases into a systematic assembly that, when recorded and analyzed, makes sense. This contrast between a past that is loosely connected or “aggregate” and one that is analytically defined is precisely one of the differences that Ong draws between oral and literate cultures.¹⁹ Although certainly lawyers had long been literate, I am suggesting that, prior to the late fifteenth century, the means by which lawyers collected and recollected their knowledge about the law was characteristic of the manner in which oral societies regard their pasts. “Writing makes ‘words’ appear similar to things,” observes Ong, “because we think of words as the visible marks signaling words as decoders: we can see and touch such inscribed ‘words’ in texts and books. Written words are residue. Oral tradition has no such residue or deposit.”²⁰ Ong here talks about “writing,” but his allusion to “texts and books” hints that he has printing in mind. It is the printing of the reports that gives authority, meaning, credibility, and substance to the “wandering and masterless” condition of the law.

II. Sticks And Stones

Contrary perhaps to our expectations, the translation of the law from oral custom to written document did not restrict its access to only the literate. As we all know, the sixteenth century was a particularly litigious age in which all the civil courts were clogged with cases. Rather, this translation substantiated the word, turning it from “airy nothing” to “a thing of grossness.” Indeed, coincident with the lettering of the law (and of everything else) came an alteration in the perceived nature of words themselves. Where once they were conceived to be “but wind,” they now begin to matter, or, more accurately, they begin to be recognized as matter. The materialization of words can be seen in the sheer numbers of defamation cases that find their way into the Tudor courts.

For reasons we shall see shortly, suits for defamation had been largely restricted to the ecclesiastical courts for centuries. During the sixteenth century, however, slander and libel cases begin to trickle and then to flood into the civil courts. From 1500

to 1530 defamation cases are rarely found in the plea rolls or yearbooks, and when they are, they are usually masquerading as something else—conspiracy, false imprisonment, or theft—largely as a means of gaining access to and getting redress from the royal courts. Between 1530 and 1550 slander, or “*action sur le case par parols*,” appears as an independent cause of action. The Trinity 1536 term of the King’s Bench, for instance, records six cases of defamation; the same court hears seventeen cases during Trinity 1547. By the latter part of the century, defamation cases inundate the courts, with seventy-one slander suits being heard by King’s Bench in Hilary 1598 alone.²¹ By 1647 John March laments (and at once advertises the need for his book, *Actions for Slander*) that defamation cases “doe at this day bring as much Gryste to the Mill, if not more, then any one branch of the Law whatsoever.”²² Why? Why should the courts be suddenly burdened with actions for words?

It was, in fact, essentially on the argument that words are non-material and hence can effect no material injury that defamation became the province of the church courts during the fourteenth century. In refusing to hear a slander suit a Suffolk court in 1315 declared that words are “but wind,” and do not give rise to a cause for action. Words are but wind; they are, as Falstaff would agree, air; they are insubstantial and can do no substantial damage. In *Othello*, Brabantio expresses much the same view: “But words are words: I never yet did hear / That the bruis’d heart was pierced through the ear” (I. iii. 221-22). The relegation of slander to the church courts “was a division between acts which had physical consequences and those which entailed an essentially intangible or ‘spiritual’ loss.”²³ Because defamation was based on the notion of *infamia*, the loss of fame or good repute, the most common punishment for those found guilty was, simply, public penance and public apology. The defendant would march in a parish procession in penitential garb, confess “in a loud and intelligible voice that he had erred, and ask pardon of the complainant.”²⁴ One cannot help but be reminded of *Much Ado about Nothing*. Claudio is forced to read publicly his apology for falsely accusing Hero. The scene takes place in a graveyard, before Hero’s monument, the physical reminder of just what substantial damage slanderous words can do.

Obviously, something happens to the concept of “words” between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Despite the spiritual nature of the offence, the earliest defamation cases record a sense of physical harm suffered by the plaintiffs: one defendant is charged with having “assaulted [the plaintiff] with

foul words" and another with having "hurled abusive words." And even the Constitution of the Council of Oxford (1222), upon which English defamation law is based, acknowledges that "profit or favor" can be gained through slander.²⁵ If something can be gained it would stand to reason that something—income, a marriage prospect, a position, whatever—could also be lost. Yet, it was not until the sixteenth century that the courts began to recognize the hurt or the loss that could be incurred through words. In fact, it was precisely the demonstration that something had been lost that justified a cause of action. John March gives us the general rule for "actionable words":

That all scandalous words which touch or concerne a man in his life, Liberty, or Member, or any corporall punishment; or which scall a man in his Office or place of Trust; or in his Calling or function by which he gains his living; or which tend to the slandering of his Title or his disinheritance; or to the losse of his advancement, or preferment, or any other particular damage; or lastly which charge a man to have any dangerous infectious disease of which he ought to separate himselfe, or to be separated by the law from the society of men: all such words are actionable.²⁶

No wonder March complained that slander was "Gryste for the Mill," since it would seem that one could be sued for nearly anything one said. Yet, that was not quite the case. It was not actionable, for instance, to call a lawyer a bankrupt, for the state of bankruptcy did not interfere with the lawyer's pursuit of his "Calling"; but it would be actionable to call a merchant a bankrupt, for financial credibility was essential to his vocation. March himself provides a more colorful example. A brewer named Dickes failed twice in his suit against one Fenne, who reportedly boasted "I will give a peck of Malt to my mare, and lead her to water to drinke, and she shall pisse as good beere as Dickes doth brew." The suit failed, first, because the court deemed the words impossible (no matter how much malt and water she has had, a mare cannot piss beer) and second because Dickes claimed no loss of custom.²⁷ For slander to have occurred the words must cause relevant and material loss, something not thought possible two hundred years earlier.

Curiously, for libel (written defamation) the rule is not quite the same. While the plaintiff in a slander case must allege and prove that he has suffered actual damage, no special damage need be alleged or proved in a libel case.²⁸ This distinction was not formulated until the eighteenth century, yet intimations of it are

evident in Tudor and Stuart law. The harsher treatment of printed sedition has already been alluded to. In his comments on the statute *De libellis famosis*, Coke notes that, whether true or false, a libel "may be by writing, pictures, or figures."²⁹ He is concerned here with the publication of the libel, its presentation to and circulation among others. In fact, as Coke acknowledges in John Lamb's case, a libel is not a libel until it is presented to others: "No man can be convict as Libeller, unlesse he be a procurer, contriver, or publisher; reading, hearing, or writing a Libell is not a publication; repetition in the presence of others, knowing it to be a libel, is."³⁰ While the notion of repetition carries with it a verbal statement, elsewhere Coke seems to limit a libel to a physical object: "He that finds a Libell must burn it, or deliver it to the Magistrate."³¹ This distinction between slander and libel is important. Slander retains some of the older law's dismissal of spoken words; since it is spoken and thus "air," the court needs proof that the words have done damage. Libel needs no such proof; since it is printed (or sculpted or painted), it is substantial, a thing to be burned or delivered, and thus, like documentary evidence, it stands by itself. Ironically, a libel (literally, "a little book" [OED]) is false, maliciously conceived and circulated to discredit; but, precisely because it is "published," the reader assumes (or is deemed to assume) it to be true and authentic. "I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we know they are true."

As it transformed itself from oral practice to literate practice, the law both reflected and stimulated the new status to which the larger culture assigned the printed word. The gradual independence of documentary evidence, the change from oral to "paper" pleading, the authority of the printed reports, and the evolution of libel law all testify to the substantiation of the word, to its alteration from "wind" to "thing," to the cultural shift from a respect for the "word of honor" to a dependence on "letters of credit." During the first decade of the seventeenth century the theater, like the law, experiences a transition toward a "literate" state. This transition is evidenced, in part, by the physical move of the theater from the "public" to the "private" stage. While the implications of this change have been debated by Ann Jennalie Cook, Andrew Gurr, and others, it seems apparent that the typical audience in the private theaters were more learned, more literate, than they formerly had been. Moreover, the shift to the private theaters presaged a shift from performance-based drama to print-based drama. That is, during the following decade or so, publishers show more interest in authoritative editions of plays

(most notably like Jonson's *Works*) than in pirated quartos based on auditors' notes.

Just as the printed document carried more legitimacy, more authority, more "truth" in law, so too the printed play enjoyed a different status than the performed play. Anti-theater commentators, from Stephen Gosson to William Prynne, condemn the performance of plays and, of course, eventually succeed in banning their performance. Yet, they have very little to say about the printing or reading of plays, even though they recommend some caution against dangerous books.³² The difference is that performed plays, the "filthie and dishonest gestures of the Interlude players,"³³ are available only through the senses, and hence are corrupting; printed plays are available only to the literate, those armed with at least a modicum of reason.

If print effected a change in the law, in legal practice, and in the materiality of words themselves, print signaled a particularly complex and perhaps even contradictory change for the theater. After all, the theater exists in and for oral performance, which, by its nature, is temporary, ephemeral, unique, and—during Shakespeare's age at least—scandalous, even, eventually, illegal. Print, however, held the promise of duration and legitimacy, a promise that was especially alluring for writers like Ben Jonson, who as Jonas Barish has shown desired a control over his texts (not unlike Coke's shaping the law through print). Ironically, although Sir Thomas Bodley stipulated that no printed plays, or "baggage books," gain entrance to his famous library, the 1635 appendix to the Bodleian catalog includes works by Dekker, Massinger, Shirley, Ford, and Shakespeare, but not Jonson.

Partly because it is a scripted performance site, the courtroom nicely parallels a similar evolution toward a dependency on print that takes place in the theater. In fact, in their epistle to the readers in the First Folio, Heminges and Condell liken play performance to a trial: "these Playes have had their triall alreadie, and stood out all Appeals, and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court." The "Decree of Court" is the printed volume itself, in which the plays are certified to be authentic, "as where before you were abused with diverse stolen, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the frauds and stealthes of injurious imposters," and preserved for us to enjoy, "Reade him, therefore, and againe and againe." Like the signed affidavit that replaces the need for a witness, the printed play replaces the performance. Notably, the eventual Puritan ban against the performance of plays did not extend to their publication, something that certainly contributed to the resurrection of the theater

in 1660 but also to competition from the book. Printed plays can serve as advertisements of the theater, but they can also become replacements for it. According to his diary entries, by the 1670's, Samuel Pepys seems to split his time fairly evenly between seeing plays and reading them. Hence, it is not surprising if Autolycus' attitude toward print was an ambivalent one. His statement is both a credible acknowledgement of the authority we give to print and an oral deconstruction of that credence.

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Notes

¹*The Winter's Tale*, IV. i. 255. All quotations are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (New York: Longman, 1997).

²*Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), p. 51.

³Cressy, pp. 5-7.

⁴*From Memory to Written Record in England, 1066-1307* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979), p. 223.

⁵Sir William Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, vol. 9 (London: Methuen, 1923-26), pp. 167-68.

⁶L. W. Abbott, *Law Reporting in England, 1485-1585* (London: Athlone, 1977), p. 15.

⁷Abbott, p. 16.

⁸J. H. Baker, *An Introduction to English Legal History* (London: Butterworths, 1971), p. 104.

⁹Abbot, p. 61.

¹⁰In *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), Mark Rose makes a similar point about the origin of copyright: "The distinguishing characteristic of the modern author, I propose, is proprietorship; the author is conceived as the originator and therefore the owner of a special kind of commodity, the work" (1). Edward Coke, as we will shortly see, seemed especially adept at establishing himself as the originator of a special kind of commodity.

¹¹Abbott, p. 240.

¹²*The Neufme Part des Reports de Sr Edw. Coke* (London, 1615), Fol. 1, Preface.

¹³For a complete discussion of Coke's authorship of the laws of England, see Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), Chapter Two, "Writing the Law."

¹⁴Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, vol. 5. p. 454.

¹⁵*Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982), pp. 78-79.

¹⁶William Prynne, *Brief Animadversions on, Amendments of, and Additional Explanatory Records of the Fourth Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England* (London, 1667). Fittingly, J. P. Dawson titled his study of the early law reporters, *Oracles of the Law* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Law School, 1968).

¹⁷9 Coke, Fol. 1, Preface.

¹⁸Ong, pp. 112-15.

The Upstart Crow

¹⁹Ong, pp. 38-39.

²⁰Ong, p. 11.

²¹R. H. Hemholtz, *Select Cases on Defamation* (London: Selden Society, v. 101, 1985), pp. lxxiv-lxxv.

²²John March, *Actions for Slander* (London, 1647), p. 2.

²³Helmholtz, pp. lxi-lxii.

²⁴Hemholtz, p. xl.

²⁵Hemholtz, p. xiv.

²⁶March, p. 10.

²⁷March, pp. 46-48, 84.

²⁸*The Laws of England*, vol. 18 (London: Butterworth & Co., 1911), p. 609.

²⁹*The Fifth Part of the Reports of Sir Edward Coke* (London, 1605), f. 125.

³⁰9 Coke f. 59.

³¹5 Coke f. 125. The assumption that a book is true is "one reason why books have been burnt: A text stating what the whole world knows is false will state falsehood forever, so long as the text exists" (Ong, p. 79).

³²Cressy, pp. 8-9.

³³John Northbrooke, *A Treatise Against Idlenesse, Vain Playes, and Enterludes* (1598; reprint, New York: Garland, 1974), pp. 64-65.

Students Studying Shakespeare by C. W. Griffin

Read him, therefore; and again, and again: And if then you do not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can be your guides: if you need them not, you can lead your selves, and others. And such Readers we wish him.

Ending their preface to the First Folio, John Heminge and Henry Condell leave their readers in the hands of those “Friends” capable of guiding others. No doubt most of us who teach the plays aspire to be just such guides. But we also know that we teach a few students in each of our classes who hardly need us: Without our help and guidance, they are already capable of leading themselves and others. It is on this last group of readers that this study focuses. It doesn’t take a Shakespeare teacher long to recognize those students—usually not more than one or two per class—whose ability to understand and interpret the plays sets them apart from the rest. They rarely stumble over the meaning of a word or a line when called on in class, they usually provide the readiest (and most cogent) interpretation of a moment or a scene, and they write the most interesting analytic papers. But as yet, we have no systematic knowledge of how these successful students actually read a Shakespeare play. Such knowledge could serve as an invaluable guide as we try to teach others to become more intelligent readers. Being able to say with confidence that the reading techniques we are teaching really do work would give our teaching a kind of credibility that it presently may lack.

This paper is a report on a first attempt at discerning how good readers actually go about reading a Shakespeare play.¹ Adapting an interview procedure from composition and reading studies, I have studied the reading processes of students who have proven in upper-level and graduate classes to be particularly perceptive and intelligent readers of the plays. After identifying twenty-eight such readers, in my classes and those of my colleagues,² I interviewed these students as they actually read a play, in most cases *Antony and Cleopatra*, interrupting them at certain points to discern what was in their awareness at that moment. From these interviews, a set of reading practices has emerged, practices that characterize what I shall call exceptional

readers of the plays.

Exceptional readers are frequently first-time rereaders (i.e., they intend to get all they can from the text during their first reading rather than reading, say once for plot and later for meaning), who read slowly and carefully, taking the time to check the glossary and footnotes, and in many cases, to mark up their own texts copiously. Reading for them is a process of thoughtful engagement, primarily with the world created by the play's language and secondarily with that language itself. The best can hardly read a speech (sometimes not even a line) without thinking about it, inferring characters' thoughts and feelings, speculating on the hidden dynamics of their relationships, raising questions about word meanings and patterns, and feeling their way toward larger issues and themes. Their reading is so rich because they bring a great variety of schemata to bear on the playtext, schemata that enable them to perceive how characters act in relation to each other, what formal elements to look for as they read a play, and how to identify thematic and cultural patterns.

As I listened to the first few of these exceptional readers describe their rich responses to a Shakespearean playtext, I began to wonder whether I could ever develop in others the abilities they possessed. Perhaps I was in the presence of a highly talented group of people, people who possessed natural gifts simply beyond the reach of most others. But while it is true that most have been avid readers from childhood, their present way of reading results from choices they have made, choices that other students may also be taught to make.

I. Active Engagement

Reading for these exceptional readers is, for instance, a consciously active rather than a passive process: It "isn't a passive activity," said one student in her interview; "it requires an active interest; you can't just be passive with it and let it go," said another. It is "an interactive process," said still another. In fact, reading a playtext is such an intense process for two of these readers that they associated it with smoking or not smoking: One, who spoke of the "urge to get it all, like to milk it," said it is like "being a little more edgy or not smoking somehow," while the other, who characterized her style of reading as a "quest" or a "scavenger hunt," said that she had to smoke while she read. All of my exceptional readers would have agreed, I think, with the one who felt that students who took so many English classes that they couldn't focus on any one text long enough to read it closely

were making “a really big mistake” or the other who censured teachers for assigning so much reading that they subverted the whole complex process. To her, these teachers seemed to be saying, “Well, it’s just a play. It won’t take you very long to read.”

II. Reading Stance

The principal way the exceptional readers in my study bring themselves into such active, purposeful engagement with a Shakespearean playtext is to discover or even imagine for themselves a stance that requires them to communicate their ideas to others. One reader, a graduate student and secondary teacher, forces herself to read thoughtfully by imagining that whenever she reads a play, she is “beginning to read it in class with my students”; thus she focuses on “the questions that I know they’re going to ask me.” Others read the play as if they were preparing for a class discussion: One writes in the margin the points (“especially questions”) she’d like to bring up in class, while another uses the time before class to verbalize his thoughts. You read better, he said, if “you’re responsible for making that meaning and making it explicit.”

Those of us who have spent hundreds of hours each year reading and responding to student papers will be gratified to learn that it is the thought of writing papers that generates the most intensity in the majority of my exceptional readers. One, who recently received a full five-year fellowship to do graduate work at Vanderbilt, puts it this way:

So when I approach anything I approach it with the attitude, you know, what can I do with this? How can I turn this into something? How can I reconfigure this play into something that could even be published. I’m thinking long-term.

Others agreed. One said, for instance: “I do read things differently when I know I have to write papers about them. I think I read things better.” Another admitted that beginning to read with a paper in mind means that he will spend “the entire time thinking of things and marking things,” while another said that he always reads with a paper “in the back of his mind.” And given their sense of the utility of writing papers, it comes as no surprise that a number of these readers remember in particular those teachers who had them write about the texts they read, whether on reading quizzes, in journals, in short response papers, or in longer critical papers. Such papers make you “dig a little deeper,”

said one. Not only does writing "force you to read the work seriously," said another, "but then it forces you to think about it afterwards; just by getting it down on paper, you work more of it out."

III. Reading/Rereading

Anyone familiar with recent reader response studies can hardly be unaware of the emphasis critics and scholars have placed on rereading, though almost always on rereading fiction as opposed to other genres. In his discussion of reading and rereading, Marcel Cornis-Pope mentions the work of Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Northrop Frye, Wolfgang Iser, Michael Riffaterre, and Thomas Leitch;³ and I would add the more recent very thorough discussion of rereading in Matei Calinescu's *Rereading*.⁴ All of these writers agree, I think, that a first (often called naive) reading of a story is a linear, end-oriented (as Calinescu puts it) attempt to understand narrative and characters, while a rereading is a more circular attempt to reflect on the language of the text, typically for the purpose of revealing how this language constructs meaning and reveals ideology, both in the text and in the reader.⁵

But even while reading scholars discriminate between reading and rereading, most disavow any absolute chronological distinction between the two processes. "What should be clear," says Calinescu, "is that reading and rereading often go together,"⁶ while Cornis-Pope says that "ideally, the reader should pursue an uninterrupted, 'double dialectic', with an active, transformative re-reading already implied in first reading."⁷ Even such a compulsive rereader as Roland Barthes in *S/Z* recommends "reading the text as if it had already been read." "Rereading," he continues, "is here suggested at the outset . . ." ⁸ Thomas Leitch calls readers who combine the processes of reading and rereading "first-time rereaders—that is, readers who have trained themselves, in effect, to reread a story the first time they read it . . ."⁹

Most of the highly effective readers in this study are either, to borrow Leitch's term, first-time rereaders, or readers whose first-time reading hovers somewhere between the processes of reading and rereading. It's not so much that they don't read the text or at least parts of it again, as it is that they act like rereaders on first reading: Their principal rereading behaviors are as follows:

- 1) Most read very slowly, so slowly that they often apologize for their slow pace: "I'm a very slow reader,"

said one; "I always knew I was very slow," said another. "If I read something fast, I have to read it again," said a third. (I might note, by the way, that forty years ago, long before the term "rereading" was *au courant*, Reuben Brower described the same process as reading in "slow motion."¹⁰ Terms such as "studying" or "examining" a text seem to me to be more accurate than "reading" to describe the slow, careful process of the exceptional readers described in this study.

2) These readers seem intensely involved in the reading process itself, so intent on what they are reading that they can brook no interruption. "I can't have the TV going, have music going; I can't have somebody talking," said one. Another said that the process is so intense that she cannot do it after work when she's tired.

3) Most underline and annotate their text continually: In their notes, they identify characters, define words, explain allusions, summarize complex speeches, identify stage directions in the lines, interpret (and sometimes judge) characters' words and actions, note significant moments, images, or motifs, and raise questions.

4) Even at the very beginning of a play, most read in a circular or recursive fashion, first reading, then stopping to reread or check a footnote or annotation, and then beginning to read again. "I read and reread and I tend to jump in and out in terms of footnotes and glosses," said one. Another described her process thus: "I read back, I jump around a lot," while still another said: "If . . . I don't get it, I'll go back and read it again, however many times it takes me to get it and then I'll just go on and do the whole thing that way."

As I suggested at the beginning of this discussion, the relationship between reading and rereading is a relative one, both in the theoretical literature and among these readers. Thus, even, for example, the most scrupulous first-time rereaders I interviewed often read a playtext or at least a part of it a second and perhaps a third time. Some will take the time to reread the part of the play actually discussed in class on a given day ("I'll read the whole thing," said one whom I've already quoted above, "and then whatever we discuss in class I go back and read those parts"), while others will reread the parts that help them develop ideas or find evidence for a paper. And, with a few exceptions, even those readers who professed to read a text twice (i.e., once for plot and character and once for the complexities of the language) actually read as slowly, intently, and thoughtfully on first

reading as those who professed to be first-time rereaders. One reader who began our interview by describing herself as a first-time, second-time reader ended by admitting: “. . . I think that I’ve started jumping to that in-between first and second reading stage because I don’t have the luxury of having that first, that time for the first read.” Another was surprised to learn that he was “analyzing right from the very start.” Perhaps the following comment on reading/rereading, made by one of the most effective readers of the group, summarizes succinctly attitudes and practices of most of these readers:

I’m a firm believer in close reading and getting as much as I can the first time through. However, if I were reading this for a class, more than likely I would read it twice.

The fact that most of the readers in my study tend toward a first-time rereading rather than a first quick and then a full second reading indicates to me that they have found a way to adapt to the exigencies of their academic situation, for while we faculty may exhort our students to read and then reread, it should be obvious even to us that most hardly have the time to fulfill our wishes in any systematic way. An English major struggling to keep up with weekly reading assignments in, for instance, three literature courses—reading an eighteenth century novel, a Shakespeare play, and a selection of Donne poems in the same week, while, perhaps, working on a paper—hardly has the time to be rereading what he or she read last week. What, I wonder, does this fact imply for our teaching? Should our classes themselves become more the sites for such rereadings? Should we, for example, spend more time actually having students read (aloud and silently) and analyze passages in class, showing them how to identify those aspects of a text that might then enter into the higher level, more encompassing interpretations that we aim for?

IV. In and Out, or Immersion and Interactivity

Whether their approach is primarily phenomenological, textual, or response oriented, scholars and critics interested in the reading process typically describe it as a continuous and recursive movement between immersion in the concrete world represented by the text and thoughtful interactivity with this world and the processes of its construction. In his excellent discussion of their respective theories, William Ray analyzes Mikel Dufrenne’s

distinction between imagination and reflection, Georges Poulet's between perception and reflection, Roman Ingarden's between concretization and investigative reflection, and David Bleich's between symbolization and resymbolization.¹¹ Given the dualistic nature of these descriptions, it is tempting to divide the reading process into two highly distinct phases, with concretization (creation of the world represented by the text) followed by reflection (analysis of that world and of its construction). After all, doesn't one have to concretize a world before he or she reflects on its meanings and constructions? Such an assumption has led some Shakespeare teachers in the past (myself included) to encourage their students to read a play as if it were being fully produced in the theatre of their minds, hearing characters' voices and visualizing their costumes, actions, gestures, facial expressions, etc.

However, my interviews with readers in this study suggest that there is no such thing as a theatre of the mind, at least if one means by that phrase a fully concretized world (whether viewed as a stage production or a film) continually observed by the reader. Thus, for example, although my readers see images as they read, such images are never very distinct, or fully developed. Rather, settings are always partial (Egypt is pictured as desert sand, a few little trees, and windswept terra cotta figures; Cleopatra's palace is represented by images of columns or colonades) and human figures are "hazy," "shadowy," or "dream-like"; for example, a reader will have a vague sense of characters entering a room or of attendants swarming around a stationary character, or of soldiers wearing skirts and swords, etc. Not surprisingly, the most distinct images, particularly of characters, arise from films readers have seen: Thus, Cleopatra is often pictured as Elizabeth Taylor, Antony as Richard Burton, and Octavius Caesar looks like Marlon Brando, "sort of."

One reason that these images are so indistinct is that plays simply don't provide many cues for constructing concrete images: Without a narrator, whatever image a reader creates must arise from stage directions (almost always highly abbreviated in Shakespeare) or more often from something a character says, for example, when Cleopatra asks an attendant to loosen her stay, one reader pictures her dress. But the underlying reason that readers' images are so indistinct and incomplete is, as Wolfgang Iser puts it: "Our mental images do not serve to make the character physically visible; their optical poverty is an indication of the fact that they illuminate the character, not as an object, but as a bearer of meaning."¹² Thus, for example, readers in this study

don't so much have concrete images of characters as they do of the feelings or meanings they attach to these characters; for example, as Cleopatra and Antony enter, one reader envisions her as being sarcastic; another describes two characters arguing as being engaged in a sparring match or bantering, while, another who describes the same moment as a fencing match, sees Cleopatra dancing around Antony "trying to rile him up"; another reader describes a threatening figure as brooding or sarcastic, while yet another sees adversaries making peace as engaged in "political matchmaking."

If Iser is right, readers do not necessarily create an imaginary world at one moment and then reflect on its meanings in the next; rather, they often do both at the same time. In other words, the imaginary world they create is often itself a world constituted by meanings they have discerned. Thus, a number of these readers describe comprehension and interpretation as simultaneous processes:

... I read and have the thought at the same time and the thing that follows ... is writing it down;

Like maybe I'm still reading and maybe there's a process in the back of my head still working on what I've read before. It's hard to describe;

I mean, I think, I'm not sure if those two things can happen simultaneously, if I can be saying them in my head and trying to figure out what they mean at the same time but it's pretty close;

It's almost like there's a voice that's doing the reading but then there's a thinker behind the voice that's thinking it through;

I mean, there's always a part of me as a reader, who is kind of above the text and there's a good portion of me who's involved in the text and enjoying it on that level.

In his *Literary Meaning*, William Ray, building on Sartre's concept of "imagining knowledge," proposes this description of the reading process, a description that echoes the statements above:

Reading occurs, then, neither entirely in the mode of conceptual meaning nor in that of an intuitively full image. Rather it is the suspension of consciousness between these two poles: no longer pure rule and order, yet not quite full image.¹³

As the foregoing discussion suggests, where the kind of involved, interpretative reading I have been describing leaves off and the more removed, reflective or investigative thinking identified by critics such as Ingarden picks up is almost impossible to discern. But that a second type of more extensive reflective thinking does occur is revealed by readers who describe themselves as immersed in the world of the text at one moment and reflecting on it at the next: One reader said, for example: "I'll stop and I'll think about it for a minute, and then I go back to the text," while another said, "I think the enjoyment comes when I then pull back and have started to get an idea about what's going on and see the complexity." More significantly, two readers who described the processes of imagination and reflection as simultaneous at one moment suggest at another that the two processes are separate: One said, ". . . I can read back and forth between being objective and analyzing the text and becoming wrapped up in it," while another puts it this way:

What I find that I do is that I may read a few lines and then reflect on them before I read more, but sometimes I'm reading and thinking simultaneously.

V. Scripts and Documents

When it comes to *what* they reflect on as they read, the expert readers in this study situate themselves along a continuum, ranging at one end from those who read the text as a scripted set of speech acts to be interpreted to those who read it more as a document to be analyzed. Both groups are highly sensitive to the language of the play, but their response to it takes them in different directions. For script readers, the play's language is a transparent medium through which they enter the felt life of the play's characters—their motivations, attitudes, relationships with each other, etc. When asked what they are looking for as they read, they responded as follows:

I look for things that help me see the personalities of the characters;

I was looking at what he was saying, what she was saying, her responses to him;

I tend to focus more on the relationships between the characters than on sort of the political structure and the plots and the outside plots.

And their transcripts are full of comments and questions such as these: Antony seems divided between his life in Egypt and his duty to Rome. What is there about Antony's personality that makes it difficult for the messenger to talk to him? Cleopatra seems not to have a clue about why Antony must seem so heroic and dashing and taking care of the whole universe. How much is Antony being played for a fool by Cleopatra? What's the significance of the fact that Cleopatra's attendant Charmian seems so competitive with her? Why does Enobarbus say, "Hush, here comes Antony" when it's Cleopatra who walks in? Why does Enobarbus so insensitively ignore Antony's melancholy mood? As soon as Antony gets even a hint that Cleopatra is trying to control him, she backs off. What does the way these people treat messengers tell you about them and their use of power? Antony doesn't seem to understand Cleopatra at all. Antony seems a curiously passive character and he just accepts what people tell him. Even though she seems self-centered, Cleopatra is actually more sensitive than Antony is. And so on.

Readers at the document end of the spectrum are equally sensitive to the language of the play, but for them it is more opaque, more a medium to be analyzed in and of itself. They tend to be more utilitarian than the script readers: Two, for example, read from the very beginning with a paper in mind: ". . . I'm reading this, it's more for usually to write a paper . . . that's why I pick up on conceits and that stuff," said one, while the other said, "I always read with a paper in mind." And three of these document analysts seem to have a more clearly defined critical framework than the script readers: One indicates, for example, that she is prone to "feminist readings" and aware of "racial stereotypes"; another that he looks for oppositions, while the third, who looks often for class conflicts, said that on first reading he would pick up on issues that he is "oriented to theoretically," and then "tease out more subtle meanings, sexual allusions, subtexts" on second reading. This last reader is the only reader in my study to be very conscious of issues of representation and textual construction: When asked about his reading goals, he said:

I think when I was younger, it was the story. The story mattered, not the way things were represented but the representations themselves. I got emotionally involved with a story like "Hobgoblins" by Gorky. I would get deeply involved with that, you know, it would disturb me to read something like that but I loved it. However, over the last few years, I've become more involved with

the process of representation, the way these things are done and the way these things—characters and plots—are constructed to affect readers. And I tend to be more aware of that than I am my own involvement with the story. Although that does still play a role, I am still involved with the story.

I am not saying, by the way, that what distinguishes the readers in this study is whether they are aware of the larger thematic and cultural issues that grow out of reading a play. They simply arrive at these conclusions in a different way, with the first group moving outward from their perceptions about characters and relationships to the larger concerns in the play, while the other group tends to pick up the same sorts of themes from allusions, important images, and repetition of motifs. One reader in this second group, for example, had developed an almost uncanny ability to spot the motive or reference that would lead him to a central theme of the play, even though sometimes he was not very aware of the subtle character dynamics of a scene.

It is true, however, that in the middle of my script to document continuum are those readers who seem able to balance their involvements with characters by a concern for larger issues. They seem more aware than the script readers, for example, of the need to understand the larger issues of the play, for they made such statements as these:

I'm looking for what is propelling the play forward;

I pulled back for just a second and started thinking about how these things fit together, not only in my mind but in the play's mind;

I'm trying to figure out how this kind of goes along with the play . . . trying to see how it works in the play;

. . . I think a lot of it's an intuitive sense of what the issues are and how those issues are going to be developing. . . .

Although very much like the script readers in that they are attentive to subtleties of character and relationships, these readers, like the document analyzers, jump more quickly to observations about theme. One, who was particularly sensitive to language throughout her reading, spotted (in Philo's opening references to Antony's "dotage," his eyes glowing like "plated Mars," his being "a strumpet's fool") the play's conflict between the values of Egypt and those of Rome. Another, sensing the tension

in Antony between love and duty, wondered "who the real Antony was" and whether Antony's affair with Cleopatra raised "some sort of moral issue. . . . Is this maybe part of the tragedy, maybe the flaw," he asked? Another jumped quickly from her impression that everyone at the meeting between Antony and Caesar in II. ii "seems on the surface like they're very happy that everything is settled and Antony is going to marry Octavia" (II. ii. 152-58) back to Enobarbus' earlier line "That truth should be silent, I had almost forgot" (II. ii. 113) to the conclusion that "they don't face up to the truth" to two later references to getting away from the truth. Finally, one perceptive reader, who upon being interrupted about eight minutes into his first reading, said, "I was trying to come up with lines that kind of serve as thematic" summarized later in a second reading (at the end of reading one and one-half acts) the themes he saw developing as private duty versus public duty, head versus heart, Egypt versus Rome, and puppet versus master.

In a study of readings of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," George L. Dillon describes three different reading styles: the Character-Action-Moral style, the Digger-for-Secrets style, and the Anthropologist style.¹⁴ Although the readers in my study correspond only roughly to Dillon's three types of readers, his suggestion that what distinguishes the three reading styles is immersion versus analytic distance does seem to me to describe what I have observed, as long as one realizes that even the readers I have designated as script readers all have the ability to draw back from their experience of the play and arrive at statements of theme; they just arrive at them in a different way.

VI. Schemes and Routines

Most students of reading now agree that the process is at every stage creative and constructive, for it involves predicting and creating meaning on the basis of knowledge we already possess. And many psychologists now think of human understanding as existing in a set of data structures or cognitive frameworks called "schemata." These schemata enable us to understand how to behave when we enter a restaurant, how to shop for clothes, how to recognize a face, and, for that matter, how to read a play. Judging by their behavior, almost all the readers in this study must possess what one might call an "Antony and Cleopatra" schema, whether drawn from film, history, or what they know of the play, for, with the exception of one reader who needed to consult an encyclopedia, all understood what was

happening in the play's opening scene.

In fact, my observations of the expert readers in this study suggest to me that they bring to their reading of a playtext a rich set of schemata—psychological and social schemata that enable them to perceive the significance of characters' words and actions; formal schemata that guide their reading of the play and lead them to note important conflicts, characters, and moments; and critical and cultural schemata that enable them to identify thematic and cultural patterns. At a very basic level, for example, the readers in this study seem to have in their minds what I would describe as a playtext schemata: When they sit down to read a Shakespearean play, they expect, first, that they will encounter identifiable characters speaking to each other in such a way that what they say and seem to say will signify their attitudes toward and relationships with each other (what one reader in this study called the "inner actions" of a play); second, that characters' dialogue will cohere enough to tell a story, typically a story centered around the resolving of a problem; and third, that this story will have some sort of significance, thematic or cultural or both, beyond itself.

Thus, most of these readers begin their reading by trying to discern the relational dynamics that constitute the play at its most basic level. They ask themselves: What exactly is character X saying to character Y, and why does he say it? And then why does Y reply as he does? And why does X respond to Y's reply as he does? And so on. And for that matter, how about characters A, B, and C, who are silent at the moment; how are they responding to the exchange they are hearing? But rather than trying to pin labels on characters or state the obvious, as some critics assume, these readers are attempting to penetrate the surface of dialogue, often complicated and complex, to get a sense of its meanings, feel, or significance.

In order to understand the relational dynamics of a play, these readers must also bring a variety of other psychological, social, and cultural schemata to bear in their reading, schemata that enable them to infer from cues that the Roman soldiers scorn Antony for his involvement with Cleopatra, that Antony is deeply infatuated with Cleopatra, that she tries to retain what power she has in their relationship through being coy and manipulative, that he is torn between his love of Cleopatra and duty to Rome, etc.

Of most interest to readers of this paper may be the more strictly formal or literary schemata these readers apply as they read, i.e., those features such as imagery, motifs, rhetorical figures, and others that readers might expect to find particularly

significant as they read and analyze a playtext. Borrowing the concept from transformational grammar, critics such as Jonathan Culler and Peter Rabinowitz call such schemata “rules”;¹⁵ I prefer the term “procedures.” As a group, these expert readers apply a variety of such procedures as they read and analyze: A number, for example, expect that the major problem or central conflict of the play will be set forth at its opening and about an equal number are also aware that functional figures such as soothsayers and messengers can be significant. But there is little consensus about the importance of other formal features: One reader notices verse forms, another ambiguities, another scene parallels and contrasts, others important images, connotations or allusions, etc.

Rather than presuming to set forth strategies other Shakespeare teachers might use to transform their students into exceptional readers, I’m going to conclude by describing three issues this study has raised for me: First, do the differences between script readers and document analysts arise from ways these students have been taught or from their different perceptual and cognitive styles, or from some combination of the two? Second, why is there not more consensus among these readers on what formal features of the text to be aware of? And why is there not more similarity between the larger or more general interpretative operations or frameworks these readers use? Thus, one reader looks for important patterns, especially repetitions, while another looks for oppositions, and only a few readers seem sensitive to the questions of gender and power raised at the beginning of the play. Do these differences reflect the current lack of consensus in our discipline about which procedures to use in literary analysis and therefore what procedures to teach our students? And third, when we teach students to interpret a play, as most of us do, whether we teach them to look for encompassing themes or cultural patterns, are we really teaching them to read? Or, since most of us were probably exceptional readers as students, are we perhaps assuming the very reading skills that we should be teaching.

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Notes

¹As terms such as “implied reader,” “model reader,” “super-reader,” “ideal reader,” “inscribed reader,” “informed reader,” etc., suggest, critics and scholars have studied the process of reading texts, especially fiction, for years. But as these

terms also suggest, with the exception of a few—Norman Holland, David Bleich, Eugene Kintgen, Marcel Cornis-Pope come to mind—rarely have they studied how actual readers process a text. Rather, they have typically theorized about an idealized readerly competence, that reading ability that a text or genre seems to imply or call for. In his *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), Jonathan Culler offers the best explanation for why actual readers have been ignored when he says that behavior, which can be influenced by a host of irrelevant factors, may not be a direct reflection of competence. Possibly. But as researchers in the social sciences have known for years, behavior is the only observable index of competence we have.

²Twenty-three of these readers were selected from upper-level and graduate Shakespeare classes at my university, an urban university of approximately twenty-three thousand students; our English department offers a BA and an MA in English. To check my sample, I interviewed five undergraduate students selected from an upper-level Shakespeare class at the University of Richmond, a selective, private institution of about three thousand students. Students from both universities seemed equally skilled readers of the plays.

³Marcel Cornis-Pope, *Hermeneutic Desire and Critical Rewriting: Narrative Interpretation in the Wake of Poststructuralism* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 22.

⁴Matei Calinescu, *Rereading* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), see especially Part 1, 3-56.

⁵Calinescu, p. 3.

⁶Calinescu, p. 18.

⁷Cornis-Pope, p. 22.

⁸Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), pp. 15-16.

⁹Thomas Leitch, "For (Against) a Theory of Rereading," *Modern Fiction Studies*, 33 (1987), 492.

¹⁰Reuben Brower, *In Defense of Reading: A Reader's Approach to Literary Criticism* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962), p. 4.

¹¹William E. Ray, *Literary Meaning: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984). See especially parts one and two, 8-108.

¹²Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 138.

¹³Ray, p. 22.

¹⁴George L. Dillon, "Styles of Reading," *Poetics Today*, 3 (1982), 77-88.

¹⁵Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975); Peter Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1987).

**“Now will I to the chink, / To spy . . .”:
Scopophilia as Gender Sport in
A Midsummer Night’s Dream
by Jeffrey D. Frame**

No other period in history seems to have given more attention to the socio-cultural concepts of “looking” and “listening” than the modern-postmodernist twentieth century, and for obvious reasons. From Freud and Lacan to Hitchcock and Foucault, one can observe an evolving and now flourishing preoccupation in books and journals with the “gender gaze,” voyeurism, spectatorship, and an informed “optometric psychology” all largely propelled by the scopophilic nature of a cinematic, media-saturated society. When it is applied to literary studies, the natural ramification of this infatuation with the camera obscura is a hypersensitivity to the presence and power of the gaze in classic texts as well as in texts from this century. Since Shakespeare’s plays are no exception, they can hardly be exempt from general discussion concerning the countless recurrences of eavesdropping and clandestine confidant-forging found in great storytelling, particularly in Renaissance comedy. Spying serves a diversity of functions in Shakespeare’s comedies—information acquisition, demonstrative evidence, cautionary supervision—functions that ultimately become means by which the “watcher” can wield power over the “watched.”

The terms “voyeurism” and “spectatorship” imply two versions of our preoccupation with the pleasurable gazing exercise known as scopophilia: the first involves watching as an unseen observer; however, the second represents a gaze in the presence of and perhaps even shared by others. Perhaps the most salient arguments for both voyeurism and spectatorship as legitimate focal points in the study of gender competition in Shakespeare are those suggested by character behavior in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Numerous acts of gazing are committed by the characters of Shakespeare’s other plays: for instance, the paternally protective peeping of Prospero in *The Tempest*; the perception-bending, metadramatic devices of the Induction in *The Taming of the Shrew* and of the Epilogue in *As You Like It*; or Troilus’s most unpleasant revelation of Cressida’s unfaithfulness while he is camouflaged just outside the Greek enemy camp. However, in addition to serving as an instrument of plot in many other plays of Shakespeare, these scopophilic activities play yet another vital

role unique to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—one of unequivocally thematic significance. By identifying scopophilic symptoms and behavior in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one may examine how voyeurism and spectatorship—both predominantly masculine control tactics in the story—rival other generic “power play” behavior demonstrated by Shakespeare's characters and how they both are thereby manipulated subtly throughout the text, either consciously or instinctively, to shape not only the generic identity, submission, and expectations of other characters, but the very meaning of the text itself.

Parenthetically, some readers will properly see a connection between this study of scopophilia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and certain Oedipal, psychoanalytic, and homoerotic aspects of other Shakespeare plays. Many discussions concerning these aspects are well-known and profuse. Such theories are avoided in this brief discussion, however, for three reasons: ultimately, the theories are only indirectly relevant to the broader definition of scopophilia, especially when read in the somber light of Freud's “psychical consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes”¹; furthermore, whereas voyeurism may have once “applied only to men with a serious disturbance,”² today the term is no longer gender-specific, nor is it relegated any more to the singular observation of sexual activity; and finally, despite the highly recognized homoerotic cultural tensions imposed upon English Renaissance actors, men and boys alike, contemporary arguments dealing with those tensions tend to overinflate them, often at the expense of numerous other critical issues lying at the heart of authorial intent and cultural context.

To address properly then the distinctly scopophilia-related questions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the reader may benefit from a brief review of character and event as each unfolds within the multiple plots of the play. In the midst of Oberon's and Titania's clash of interests over the changeling boy and their battle for dominion in the forest's fairy world, humans likewise clamor for identity and domination on a parallel plane of reality. Having defeated her in physical battle, Duke Theseus of Athens must now conquer his formidable, Amazon war-prize Hippolyta in the socio-political arena while juggling untimely, sensitive domestic disputes at the same time. Those points of conflict, ignited by Egeus' customary patriarchal stubbornness, include Lysander's and Hermia's passion for one another, Demetrius' declaration of love for Hermia, and Helena's unrequited devotion to Demetrius. In the meantime, Bottom and the other “mechanicals” attempt to find meaning and audience in their

creation of Quince's rendition of *Pyramus and Thisby*. Considering the broad range of character and event in the play, which characters show symptoms that can be considered scopophilic, and why? How do their actions as either voyeurs or spectators (or as both) in the play empower them, elevating their status and control over other characters? If one character's identity depends upon the identity of another, how does voyeurism serve this need in the play? Is the watcher necessarily always in a position of power and the watched always in a position of weakness, or vice versa—in part, because of the watcher's voicelessness? Regina Schwartz, raising similar questions in her investigation of voyeurism in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, decides that "Such questions push psychoanalysis, willingly or not, into the realm of politics, where insights into the complexities of the gaze could enable objects of sight to begin to reclaim their gaze—or, at least, their subjectivity."³ An abbreviated exploration of the traditional character groupings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—fairies, lovers, nobles, rustics—and their interactive scopophilic enterprises provides a source of diverse responses to these questions and their political implications suggested by Schwartz.

The most conspicuous scopophiles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are the fairies, notably Puck and Oberon. Through invisibility, they become (as do most of the supernatural creatures in Shakespeare's plays) the consummate voyeurs. No sooner has Puck, as early as his second line in the play, warned a fairy in Titania's train to "Take heed the Queen come not within his [Oberon's] sight" than Shakespeare has already begun to alert his audience to Oberon's primary *modus operandi* for maintaining sovereignty over the fairy kingdom: looking and listening.⁴ In act one, scene two after his initial confrontation with Titania, Oberon launches his plan of retaliation against his queen by instructing Puck to fetch the magic flower, "love-in-idleness" (II. i. 168). In so doing, Oberon eloquently discloses how he first witnessed the location of the rare herb: "Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell" (II. i. 165). Revealing himself then as a creature uncommonly reliant on his sight as a source of knowledge and exclusive advantage, Oberon delivers one of his most illuminating speeches, conveying in it the power unleashed in the act of "beholding":

Having once this juice,
I'll watch Titania when she is asleep,
And drop the liquor of it in her eyes;
The next thing she waking looks upon
(Be it on lion, bear, or wolf, or bull,
On meddling monkey, or on busy ape),

She shall pursue it with the soul of love.
 And ere I take this charm from off her sight
 (As I can take it with another herb),
 I'll make her render up her page to me.
 But who comes here? I am invisible,
 And I will overhear their conference.

(II. i. 176-87)

Two types of voyeuristic power plays are set into motion in this soliloquy. First, Oberon is empowered by watching Titania as she sleeps. The act of watching someone sleep becomes, in fact, a recurrent motif and a celebrated signifier of the play's title as Puck scans the sleeping lovers on two separate occasions; Helena discovers the sleeping Lysander; Lysander spies the dreaming Hermia; Oberon peers at Demetrius resting; Theseus and his court inspect the sleeping lovers during the hunt in act four; and Oberon gazes a second time, now with Puck, upon the charmed Titania along with her Bottom while he dozes. Secondly, Oberon becomes transparent so that he may spy on the unsuspecting mortals. In both types of scopophilic activity, the watcher remains unseen, thereby taking on the role of the voyeur with all of its accompanying potency and pleasure. The terms "scopophile" and "voyeur" are therefore appropriate for Oberon and Puck, although the arousing, vicarious substitutions for sex inherently suggested by these terms in human quarters do not necessarily apply so neatly to Shakespeare's complex and unearthly fairy world.

As the small cabal of fairies advances, another symbolic anomaly emerges through Oberon's herbal prescription for passion. A drug ingested via the eyes rather than through the nose, mouth, ears, or touch is significant in its locus of effectiveness but is clearly not an arbitrary authorial choice. Oberon, creature of sight, ironically manipulates the sight of his female counterpart in such a way as to render her powerless to change her own perception and, consequently, reduces Titania to bestial worship. To accomplish this task, he applies the "juice" directly to her eyes. Puck uses the same application mistakenly on Lysander's eyelids, an error countered by Oberon when he applies the flower to Demetrius' eyes and when, at last, he threatens to administer the remedy upon Lysander's eyes late in act three. By reiterating the eyes as the central symbol in this business of mild hypnosis (and there are well over eighty references to eyes, sight, and vision throughout the play), Shakespeare ensures the audience's understanding that these perceptual shifts among characters show not only how the play comes about, but also what the play is about.

Without resorting to pluralism or neoprimitivism, he reminds one of the inherent value in seeing the world from different angles—a vast variety of vantage points through which perception and interpretation remain in flux.

The only three characters to receive the juice of the flower in their eyes are Titania, Lysander, and Demetrius. Interestingly, the effect achieved depends largely upon gender. The joint response of the men to the charm is to ogle Helena throughout act three. While Helena is clearly the object of their subjective affection, Titania's enchantment causes the fairy queen not only to marvel at Bottom's appearance, but also compels her to forego her former fairy authority in order to convert from subject to object in the unaffected eyes of Bottom. Though she confesses to Bottom, "So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape" (III. i. 139), she instructs her attending fairies just a few lines later to "Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes" (III. i. 165) and "To fan the moonbeams from his sleeping eyes" (III. i. 173). The effect of the flower then is eventually masculine for it cultivates scopophilia in the men but makes a scopophilic victim of Titania against her will. Her only relief under Oberon's spell is her faint awareness of that spell: "The moon methinks looks with a wat'ry eye; / And when she weeps, weeps every little flower, / Lamenting some enforced chastity" (III. i. 198-200). Thus, the heavens are recognized by Titania, as they so often were by the Ancient Greeks, as the omnipotent voyeurs peeping into each person's very soul, helpless in its exposure to the gazing of the gods. Oberon's act of voyeurism and "ocular inoculation" against Titania causes her to react in such a way that woman remains object and man remains subject—a kind of exploitative crime that many feminists might still label the "rape" of Titania.⁵

Oberon and Puck spend most of their time onstage in act three in the guise of "voyeurs extraordinaire" while the lovers' confusion accelerates. As a result of Oberon's prominent position in the play's action, his voyeuristic involvement and his treatment of looking as sport at the expense of others contribute considerably to the masculine scopophilia in the play, despite the prescribed "other-worldliness" of his fairy status. Puck, who is widely accepted as androgynous in the fairy scheme, finds quite a different use for "his" voyeuristic penchant. Though the major development in Puck's character emerges through his struggle toward self-identity, watching others within shifting contexts enables him to succeed. Puck's regular duties require him to monitor mortals and fairies for Oberon while Oberon monitors him. Because Puck is precariously suspended between

being the observer and the observed, his sense of identity goes unfulfilled around Oberon. Oberon's pet-like affection for Puck does not allow Puck to ascend the fairy chain of command or even to find satisfaction in his immortality. Voyeurism is true sport to Puck only when he watches the rustics prepare their play since any observer of such coarse nonsense and disorganization is plainly in a seat of superiority over Quince and his misguided troupe. At these times Puck exercises a freedom and a power to move beyond simply eavesdropping at Oberon's whimsical behest: the fairy has his own fun not only through participating, but also possibly creating intentional mischief as he proposes, whispering to himself, "I'll be an auditor, / An actor too perhaps, if I see cause" (III. i. 79-80). Although Puck's sense of unfulfillment, even in the play's closing apologia, may be partially attributed to his generic indeterminacy, it is conceivable that his voyeuristic struggle for identity in the hierarchy of mortals and immortals is the principal cause.

Like Puck, Helena observes others as the means by which to establish her own identity. However, her observations are voyeuristic only once—when she, unseen by the slumbering Lysander, chances upon him lying in the woods. At all other times, her scopophilic behavior is purely that of a spectator—rather than voyeuristic—as she, in full view of the other lovers, returns Lysander's and Demetrius' gazes with her own look of incredulity. As the only lover who does not fall asleep early in act three, Helena repeatedly demonstrates her confusion and—like Puck, but more overtly—her dilemma in determining self-identity among the lovers with their shifting loyalties. Helena's apparent mantra, expressed in her soliloquy of act one, "Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind" (I. i. 234), is the relational compass that guides her search for self-identity in later scenes. Her earliest remarks in act three, "I see you all are bent / To set against me for your merriment" (III. ii. 145-46), with her, "Now I perceive, they have conjoin'd all three / To fashion this false sport, in spite of me" (III. ii. 193-94), reflect her inability to equate what she sees with what she knows was true earlier in her relationships with the three other young Athenians.

For the remainder of the mid-section of act three, Helena becomes chiefly spectator. Along with voyeurs Oberon and Puck she attempts to discern what is reality and her precise role in it. Eventually, the "audience Helena" must watch the chaos among Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius play itself out before she believes she can define herself through their final attitudes toward her and one another. The end of the third act never

affords her that opportunity, unfortunately, since all four of the lovers are scattered and lulled back to sleep by Puck. Nevertheless, a critical feature of act three is its careful depiction of the watched—those in a somewhat greater position of power and influence than the voiceless watchers who usually must resort to silence or defensive postures to retain their status. Among all of the characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who are detected watching others, it is ironically Puck and Helena, two non-male characters, who engage in scopophilic conduct for the express purpose of seeking self-identity, despite the fact that a great deal of their watching places them in weaker, voiceless situations.

One of the most subtle developments of scopophilia in the course of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Shakespeare's treatment of spectatorship among the nobles in three separate, but related occasions in the story. The first occurs in act one in the unmistakably patriarchal court of Theseus. Certainly, at first glance, the pivotal figures in the scene seem to be men, as Egeus (and with lesser voices, Demetrius and Lysander) makes petition to Theseus. Even when Hermia builds her argument leading Theseus to devise a third alternative in response to her predicament, Theseus remains the key agent of action and control in the scene. Upon closer examination, however, one senses a peculiar female presence exerting a poised, coercive, almost imperceptible, "spectatorly" force throughout the first scene in the person of Hippolyta. After her opening tease with Theseus—her only line in the scene—she watches the rest of the scene silently, becoming audience for us, and by so doing influences and assists the actual theatrical audience in forming clear impressions and judgments concerning the initial conflicts.⁶ Perhaps this is the only example in the entire play of a female's appropriating what has been heretofore the masculine act of spectating as she proceeds silently to use scopophilic power to usurp the patriarchal order and to raise her status above that of Theseus. This inference is most plausible when one remembers that Hippolyta is the virile Queen of the Amazons and already brings with her a lusty unconventionality to Athenian femininity. Theseus' awkward words as he prepares to withdraw reflect his moderate recognition of Hippolyta's daunting, stalwart posture: "Come, my Hippolyta; what cheer, my love?" (I. i. 122).

The next time we see Hippolyta is in act four, by which time she has begun to show signs of acclimation to Athenian society and decorum but not necessarily a compromise of her own charm and Amazonian convention. Even so, it is again Theseus

and Egeus who manipulate scopophilic command on behalf of the court as they hover above the four sleeping lovers, speculating on the cause of their presence in the woods. As in the majority of instances of people watching other people sleeping throughout the play, the watchers here again are in positions more advantageous than those of the watched.

Hippolyta's final appearance occurs in the wedding celebration of act five. Still discreetly clinging to her own sense of propriety, she submits even further to Athenian culture. However, Hippolyta challenges the traditionally passive spectator role of the feminine Athenian code when she adopts the masculine role of active spectator along with Theseus, Lysander and Demetrius during the performance of *Pyramus and Thisby*. As in act four, she at first verbally, brilliantly jousts with Theseus—a discourse on the imagination leading Theseus into some of the most well-known verses of the play, some of which depend specifically on scopophilic analogy:

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to aery nothing
A local habitation and a name.

(V. i. 12-17)

At least one significant implication in these words is that Shakespeare, along with many other writers, is a scopophile in several respects. Writers may be simply experiential students or spectators—mere recorders of life—but always with the inherent potential to become voyeurs. Like Olympian gods, they may then choose to gaze down upon their inky creatures, pushing and prodding them along with their pens. Authors are, without a doubt, surveyors of the characters who populate their texts until, one day, the watchers discover their watched creation staring back at them, as Pirandello might remind us.⁷

Theseus' and Hippolyta's conversation is followed by his call for entertainment, in answer to which Philostrate provides a list of options. Philostrate cautions Theseus against Quince's company by explaining, "It is not for you. I have heard it over, / And it is nothing, nothing in the world; / Unless you can find sport in their intents . . ." (V. i. 77-79). Perking at the word "sport" and becoming leery of Theseus' intoxicated mood, Hippolyta protests the notion that the mechanicals' earnest performance should be made sport of by Theseus and his guests

at the expense of Quince and his men. Theseus thus amends his approach in pseudo-sincerity by promising her, "Our sport shall be to take what they mistake" (V. i. 90). The play then proceeds with Theseus spearheading the gibes from the onstage audience. In reality, only three Athenian spectators mock the play-within-the-play, and they are all men. They are each taking part in what here may be termed the predominantly masculine sport of active spectatorship. Their activity takes the form of abrasive and unflattering vocal interruptions so numerous that Quince and his players find it difficult to maintain concentration and continuity in their storytelling. Hippolyta, therefore, must intervene as best she can by adopting their sloppy sport and by vocalizing her own distaste for the behavior of the audience "rowdies." By taking on this role, Hippolyta's gaze becomes reflexive and interiorized as she, in essence, beholds in that moment two kinds of "performances" transpiring, in one of which she can view herself regretfully taking part.⁸

The culmination of the interiorized gaze in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the scopophilic *mise-en-abyme* represented in *Pyramus and Thisby*. Shakespeare not only finds a suitable microcosm for Elizabethan scopophilia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream's* immediate world of Athens, but he finds another crucial, microcosmic opportunity to depict the multiple reflexivity of scopophilia through metadramatic technique in the form of Quince's play within the larger play. At the core of this "house of mirrors" is the cranny or chink in Snout's Wall. This is the hole "right and sinister, / Through which the fearful lovers are to whisper" (V. i. 163-64). Shakespeare then equates this hole to the voyeur's camera with iconic deliberation:

Thou wall, O wall, O sweet and lovely wall,
 Show me thy chink, to blink through with mine eyne!
 [*Wall holds up his fingers.*]
 Thanks, courteous wall; Jove shield thee well for this!
 But what see I? No Thisby do I see.
 O wicked wall, through whom I see no bliss!
 Curs'd be thy stones for thus deceiving me!
 (V. i. 176-80)

In just one short, satiric declaration, Shakespeare captures both scopophilic theme and device in the form of parody. He further intensifies the joke by allowing Bottom's Pyramus to confuse the visual with the aural: "I see a voice! Now will I to the chink, / To spy and I can hear my Thisby's face" (V. i. 192-93). By painting a comic picture of voyeurism as unpredictable, obscure and

dangerously presumptive, Shakespeare adds a final healthy dose of sugar to help his medicine go down, inviting his audience once again to laugh generously at its own perilous folly whenever it develops scopophilic symptoms. Here again one observes Shakespeare's inimitable literary gift of shaking his audience soundly with the voice of caution, but delicately doing so through the mouthpiece of self-parody. Perhaps Quince's Prologue makes one's own scopophilic indiscretions more palatable, forgiving in the process, when he concludes, "And through Wall's chink, poor souls, they are content / To whisper. At the which let no man wonder" (V. i. 133-34).

Voyeurism and spectatorship then, as two distinct, but related types of scopophilic "power plays" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, may not only benefit an intentionally manipulative watcher like Oberon, but also contravene the weakness of voicelessness symptomatic among involuntary observers. By remaining a voiceless observer, one can occasionally be empowered with a new, advantageous knowledge and a subversive control over the voiced and the observed, as is true for Hippolyta. A mobile scopophilia further enables the watcher to negotiate a self-identity based contextually on the identity of the watched in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, particularly in the cases of Helena and Puck. Shakespeare's clever keystone in the larger dramatic design, of course, is his reflexive grand finale in the mechanicals' performance of *Pyramus and Thisby* during which Theseus, Hippolyta, and the other nobles of Athens make their own theatre and define the visual field for the second tier of spectators: the actual theatre audience seated in the house. In his book, *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur's Gaze*,⁹ Norman K. Denzin's involved discussion of multiple gazes and reflexivity in Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rear Window* would seem to hint that Shakespeare's final act in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a similar, self-referential invitation to the theatre audience to assume the role of voyeur and to draw their own interiorized meaning from that intricate adoption process.

The investment of trust in one's eyes and the images they record has permeated modern and postmodern attempts to define our conscious, socio-cultural self-worth as a civilization. In the "Epilogue" of his *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison's narrator concludes that ". . . all life seen from the hole of invisibility is absurd"¹⁰—a hole not unlike Oberon's telescopic eye, Helena's self-conscious tunnel vision, or Bottom's empty chink—each one, perhaps, a kind of deformed aperture of Shakespeare's "human camera."¹¹ Following suit, Kobo Abe's *The Box Man* suggests that

“The reason men somehow go on living, enduring the gaze of others, is that they bargain on the hallucinations and the inexactitude of human eyes.”¹² Yet this popular, seemingly modern enigma that questions what it means to see and what it means to be seen—a socio-cultural paradox which can largely be attributed to Dostoevsky’s seminal “underground man”—had already been meticulously, insightfully, and certainly no less artfully investigated hundreds of years earlier within the Elizabethan framework by Shakespeare when he challenged both scopophilic form and content by intertwining them into *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

For this particular text in the Shakespearean canon, scopophilia moves beyond a localized, social phenomenon or mere plot-character device to become a more expansive, thematic motif—a paradigm for the politics of perception and interpretation in every culture and time period¹³—which may account partially for the play’s heightened levels of accessibility to and popularity with modern audiences, most of whom have been seduced gradually by the visual culture in which they live to view the world through a camera’s eye. Perhaps it is only contemporary American audiences who are predisposed to read the symptoms of scopophilia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*—a predilection encouraged by the patriarchic reading formation imposed upon them by the ultra-visual, gazing, American culture of the twentieth century. However, the perceived presence of scopophilic symptoms and behavior in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* may represent more than just an immediate postmodernist or strictly American sensitivity by implying a larger, perennial phenomenon in history, one that would support Shakespeare’s own recognition of the gender gaze as it existed in Elizabethan culture.

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Notes

¹A. C. Spearing, *The Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), p. 2.

²Joy Davidson, “The Secret Voyeur in All of Us,” *Cosmopolitan*, 221 (1996), p. 180.

³Regina Schwartz, “Through the Optic Glass: Voyeurism and *Paradise Lost*,” *Desire in the Renaissance: Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. Valeria Finucci and Regina Schwartz (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), p. 147.

⁴William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, et al. 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 256-83, from II. i. 19; all subsequent quotations from the play will be cited parenthetically

in the text.

⁵For an excellent discussion of the various roles both men and women have played in the evolution of feminist and gender studies over the past few decades, see Naomi Schor's "Feminist and Gender Studies," *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. Joseph Gibaldi, 2nd ed. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1992), 262-87.

⁶I am indebted to John Hirsch's production commentary on Hippolyta's world and his interpretation of her intentions in the Applause Shakespeare Library edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* edited by John Russell Brown (New York: Applause, 1996). His insightful contribution figured prominently into my own rehearsal work with the actors playing Theseus and Hippolyta when I recently produced and directed *Dream* at Trevecca Nazarene University.

⁷In Italian playwright Luigi Pirandello's play, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the mysterious "six characters" suddenly materialize on stage as fictional creations who have become self-actualized, interrupting a rehearsal by a company of "real actors" in the process. By awakening their theatrical selves, they are led to question their own identities and to seek out the elusive, yet ubiquitous author who wrote them into existence.

⁸My suggestion here concerning Hippolyta's unique perspective on the events that unfold in act five owes much to the notion of interiorized, reflexive gazing as it has been thoroughly treated by Norman K. Denzin in *The Cinematic Society: The Voyeur's Gaze* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁹Denzin's book is an invaluable resource containing comprehensive coverage of pertinent classical and contemporary social theory concerning scopophilia and its multiple forms, from Foucault to Mulvey. For another superb summary of contemporary social theory as it relates to the "cinematic gaze," see also Denzin's *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (1991).

¹⁰Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random-Vintage International, 1995), p. 579.

¹¹Although one typically attributes the advent of photography to the many nineteenth century developments in film and camera technology, the concept of the camera obscura was already well underway in Shakespeare's lifetime. Most current sources on the subject posit that Leonardo da Vinci's exploration with landscape painting and perspective in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries led to further experimentation with the notions of camera obscura and camera lucida, including the invention of the first true camera lens by Daniello Barbaro published in *La Pratica della Prospectiva* in 1568 (see Tony Patti's article in "Historically Speaking" of the May 1994 issue of *PSA Journal* [vol. 60, no. 5, p. 11]). During the next century or so, uses for the camera obscura continued to evolve rapidly in the work of Giambattista della Porta, Johannes Kepler, and Johann Heinrich Schulze, among others. Some sources, looking prior to the fifteenth century, even suggest Aristotle's keen awareness of the principle of a camera obscura evidenced in some of his earliest writings, to be followed shortly by Chinese experiments with the idea in the first century AD. Thus, the likelihood of Shakespeare's own awareness of the camera obscura along with his recurrent hinting at the notion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of the human (and fairy) as a living camera—a private "chamber" from which to view unseen a projected image of the world—not only makes the specific scopophilic connections to each character's "hole of invisibility" seem plausible, but deliberate as well.

¹²Kobo Abe, *The Box Man*, trans. E. Dale Saunders (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996), p. 86.

¹³Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), p. 158.

**“My brother had but justice”: Isabella’s Plea
for Angelo in *Measure for Measure*
by Martha Widmayer**

Few speeches have evoked such extensive critical commentary as Isabella’s plea for Angelo’s life in the final scene of *Measure for Measure*. Implored by Mariana to “but kneel by me!” (V. i. 445),¹ Isabella does far more: she assumes the role of attorney for the defense, arguing that Angelo is not guilty of the same crime for which Claudio was sentenced to death:

My brother had but justice,
In that he did the thing for which he died.
For Angelo,
His act did not o’ertake his bad intent,
And must be buried but as an intent
That perished by the way. Thoughts are no subjects,
Intents but merely thoughts.

(V. i. 456-62)

“Merely,” Mariana echoes, suggesting she perceives the same legal distinction as Isabella does and as Shakespeare presumably anticipated his audience would. But in the eyes of many critics the distinction remains elusive. After all, like Claudio and Juliet, Angelo and Mariana engaged in sexual intercourse following mutual promises of marriage. Thus, their marriage is valid, but not licit (or church solemnized). Yet, while Claudio is sentenced to death, the Deputy, according to Isabella, has committed no crime. Furthermore, though Juliet is convicted and imprisoned, the question of whether Mariana should be tried for the same offense never even arises.

How are we to account for this apparent inconsistency? Numerous critical studies attempt to make sense of Isabella’s plea by examining *de praesenti* and *de futuro* contracts,² with the usual aim of demonstrating that the marriage contract between Angelo and Mariana is more binding or valid than that of Claudio and Juliet. However, despite much scrutiny of Elizabethan marriage laws and customs, Harriet Hawkins writes, no consensus of opinion has been reached about either the exact nature of the contract each couple made or the legalities involved. Hawkins goes on to say this lack of agreement is understandable, given both Shakespeare’s vague descriptions of the contracts and the confusion over them among experts in church law:

If there is any difference between the kind of contract that Claudio had with Julietta, and the pre-contract between Mariana and Angelo, it is so super-subtle that one can readily understand why "the courts themselves in Shakespeare's day were frequently at a loss to distinguish between the two types of betrothal contract. . . ."³

Critical examinations of the two types of marriage contracts are not without merit: some in the audience, including members of the Inns of Court, might have perceived a distinction between the contracts and, as Craig A. Bernthal writes, welcomed such "'fictional questions' which furnished the beginning of debate rather than the end."⁴ But if a difference between the contracts was important to legal experts, apparently it was not important enough to Shakespeare to discuss in the play. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that at the climactic moment when Isabella kneels and pleads for her enemy's life, the dramatist would have left most of his audience scratching their heads over a fine legal distinction.

Much of the controversy surrounding Isabella's plea can be traced, I believe, to a misunderstanding of the nature of her brother's offense. Critics have long taken for granted that "Claudio is sentenced to death by Angelo for the crime of fornication."⁵ Certainly Claudio and Juliet have committed fornication, or, more aptly, ante-nuptial fornication, but so have Angelo and Mariana. However, the outcome of their sexual behavior, rather than the nature of their marriage contract, makes Claudio and Juliet legally culpable, while Angelo and Mariana are not. To my mind, recognizing the nature of Claudio's offense can clarify Isabella's plea for Angelo and the play as a whole, which seems concerned, in part, with the inequity of a statute, both fictional and real, that condemned some yet let others go free for the same behavior.

The play provides six descriptions of Claudio's offense, beginning with Overdone's announcement that the young man has been sentenced "for getting Madam Juliet with child" (I. ii. 70-71). In the same scene, Pompey enters, and Overdone asks, "what's the news with you?":

Pompey. Yonder man is carried to prison.

Overdone. Well, what's he done?

Pompey. A woman.

Given Overdone's question and Pompey's reply, there can be only one interpretation of "done," especially in the mind of an "over-done" lady. Had Shakespeare wanted his audience to

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believe that the man had been convicted for simple fornication, the talk of his offense could end here. But Overdone, taking for granted that the prisoner could not have been convicted merely for fornication, requires more information:

Overdone. But what's his offense?

Pompey. Groping for trouts in a peculiar river.

Overdone. What? Is there a maid with child by him?

Pompey. No, but there's a woman with maid by him.

(I. ii. 85-92)

Overdone's final question assumes that the prisoner is guilty of fathering a child by the maid, a fact Lucio punningly confirms.

Pompey goes on to inform Overdone of the proclamation under which all "houses" in the suburbs are to be closed. Critics generally regard this proclamation and the statute under which Claudio and Juliet are punished as one and the same. If they are the same, we should expect the bawd to be at least as worried over losing her head as her business, especially since when Pompey comes on the scene, he voices his intention to disobey the proclamation by seeing to it that Overdone maintains her "taphouse" ("Though you change your place, you need not change your trade; I'll be your tapster still" [I. ii. 107-08]). Yet, neither before nor after their arrest do the bawds express any concern about meeting the same deadly fate as Claudio. The statute under which Claudio and Juliet are convicted seems to be one thing, while the proclamation, which Overdone and Pompey break by maintaining a "house," is another.

The third description of the offense comes from Claudio himself, who tells Lucio what has happened:

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

(I. ii. 142-52)

"With child, perhaps?" Lucio asks, evidently baiting Claudio, since the condition of Juliet, standing nearby and soon to give birth, is readily apparent. "Unhappily, even so," Claudio answers

and goes on to explain that Angelo "Awakes in me all the enrolled penalties" of a "drowsy and neglected act" (I. ii. 167-71).

According to Claudio's explanation of the offense, he and Juliet followed what was in Shakespeare's age the fairly widespread, though not church-sanctioned, practice of exchanging promises of marriage, then engaging in intercourse prior to solemnization.⁶ The marriage was not solemnized, Claudio explains, only for lack of Juliet's dowry, held by her "friends" from whom they decided to conceal their love "Till time had made them for us." Why the friends would not have approved the relationship, despite Juliet's long friendship with her "cousin," Isabella (I. iv. 47-48), might be accounted for by the couple's youth; however, Claudio's association with Lucio and other denizens of the "taphouse" or alehouse (OED) suggests another explanation. When Mistress Overdone tells Lucio and the other gentlemen that Claudio was "worth five thousand of you all" (I. ii. 59-60), she is expressing admiration for his integrity. But the phrase takes on additional meaning in the context of the gentlemen's discussion of the money Lucio has been spending at the taphouse. In this context, the implication is that Claudio "was worth" an impressive amount of money that Overdone's use of the past tense suggests is gone. The fact that Overdone has such knowledge could mean that Claudio has lost all or most of his money under her roof. This would link Claudio to Lucio and the other gentlemen, who spend their time and money at the alehouse, as well as to Froth, another young heir whose father is dead and has fallen in with an "idle" companion.

Like Escalus, who warns Froth to stay away from tapsters, justices of Shakespeare's age repeatedly spoke of the danger of alehouses. Perhaps Claudio may be likened to those "accounted Gallants young Gentlemen" condemned by Justice Edward Coke for frequenting alehouses, where "by their intemperate riot, love to spend their inheritance before they come to inherit."⁷ Shakespeare may have intended his audience to assume that Claudio's "riotous youth," as Angelo calls it (IV. iv. 29), resulted in indigence—as Coke and many of the respectable sort believed was the inevitable result of alehouse-haunting. Claudio's loss of his inheritance could explain why the couple concealed their vows from her friends and were unable to afford to solemnize their union, even when Juliet found herself with child—a child who, under English law, would be considered illegitimate because the marriage, though valid ("she is fast my wife"), has not been made licit by solemn-

nization ("outward order").⁸

Shakespeare seems to have based the situation of Claudio and Juliet on a common dilemma faced by couples during his age. Much to the consternation of parents and ecclesiastical authorities, the late sixteenth century saw a considerable increase in the numbers of "private spousals"—so called because, as in the case of Claudio and Juliet, the marriage promises were made without the knowledge of "friends" (guardians, parents, or other relatives). Sometimes, these private spousals took place at alehouses where, records indicate, a number of young couples exchanged vows in direct opposition to the wishes of "friends." John Gillis goes on to say that one of the reasons for the increase in private contracts is that "self-betrothal was a way of neutralizing parental and communal power."⁹ Since sexual intercourse made valid promises of marriage immediately and fully binding,¹⁰ a young woman like the fictional Juliet could use private spousals to make her own marriage choice, irrespective of the disapproval of "friends."

The increase in the number of private spousals may have contributed to what historians have described as a sharp rise in illegitimacy in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.¹¹ Moralists of the period tended to associate bastardy with "whoredom."¹² However, indications are that the high rate of illegitimacy was more often due to circumstances like those of Claudio and Juliet. From what Keith Wrightson has found, most couples who produced illegitimate children had intended to solemnize their unions, but later discovered they could not, typically because they lacked the financial means to marry.¹³

Claudio's offense is next described by Lucio who informs Isabella that her brother is in prison:

Isabella. Woe me! For what?

Lucio. For that which, if myself might be his judge,
He should receive his punishment in thanks:
He hath got his friend with child.

(I. iv. 26-29)

Isabella's immediate solution to the problem—"O, let him marry her" (I. iv. 49)—was not an acceptable remedy for bastardy as far as many rate-payers of the age were concerned. Yet, the belief that England was being overrun by "breeding beggars and multitudes of poor children,"¹⁴ resulting in a variety of direct and indirect restrictions designed to limit access to marriage among the impoverished,¹⁵ no doubt prevented many unwed parents from legitimizing their children's births and thus contributed to

the bastardy problem.

The fifth description of Claudio's offense is offered by the Provost. As Juliet approaches him in the prison, he says to the disguised Duke,

Look, here comes one: a gentlewoman of mine,
Who, falling in the flaws of her own youth,
Hath blistered her report. She is with child,
And he that got it, sentenc'd—a young man
More fit to do another such offense
Than die for this.

(II. iii. 10-15)

Like Overdone, Pompey, Claudio, and Lucio, the Provost describes the young couple's offense in terms of Juliet's pregnancy: "She is with child, / And he that got it, sentenc'd." The Provost's sympathetic understanding of the couple's crime is in sharp contrast to Angelo's comparison of bastardy to murder ("'Tis all as easy / Falsely to take away a life true made / As to put metal in restrained means / To make a false one" [II. iv. 46-49]) and Isabella's preference for death over bastard-bearing: "I had rather my brother die by the law than my son should be unlawfully born" (III. i. 191-93).

Claudio's offense is not spoken of directly again until the final scene when Isabella refers to her brother as having been "Condemn'd upon the act of fornication" (V. i. 74). Her diction suggests it was not fornication itself but what followed upon it—the conception of a bastard child—that accounts for his condemnation.

In Shakespeare's age, fornication or antenuptial fornication could lead to penitential punishment by the church courts,¹⁶ but it was not a criminal offense punishable by justices of the peace. Bastardy was quite a different matter. Joan Kent writes that in 1576 Parliament passed the first of what over the next fifty years would become a plethora of statutes against personal conduct offenses such as swearing, drunkenness, alehouse haunting, and bastardy.¹⁷ "The first and ferocious part" of the original bastardy statute, observes Frank Milton, "seems to show Parliament using the criminal law for the purpose of suppressing immorality, but the main aim of the legislation was to reduce the numbers of paupers."¹⁸ Indeed, the poor seem to have been the usual target of justices like William Lambarde,¹⁹ particularly as Parliament, while willing to punish those whose illegitimate children might become a burden to rate-payers, openly opposed punishing "men of quality" for bastardy.²⁰ Ultimately, however, the decision

about who would be punished for bastardy rested with the individual justice. In the opening scene of *Measure for Measure*, the Duke informs Angelo, "Your scope is as mine own, / So to enforce or qualify the laws / As to your soul seems good" (I. i. 65-67). The kind of discretionary power the Duke gives his deputy was not ordinarily allowed English justices,²¹ except when it came to personal conduct statutes of the kind regulating bastardy and alehouses, many of which were bawdy houses in disguise.²² While the audience is not told to what laws the Duke is referring, perhaps it is no coincidence that the only laws we see applied under Angelo's magistracy relate to unwed parents and to the keepers of an alehouse.

Convinced that the country was being impoverished by "misbegotten bastards," William Lambarde encouraged justices to rigorously enforce personal conduct legislation.²³ Those most likely to comply were "godly magistrates," men with strong puritan leanings like Shakespeare's "precise" deputy, who felt it their duty to use their discretionary power to punish bastardy and other forms of "rough behavior":

The ideal of the "godly magistrate," a man who saw himself as a partner with the monarch in a fight against all forms of corruption typified a new approach to the notion of good governance . . . "godly" officers of the parish, as well as "godly" magistrates, could use the law as a weapon against "rough" behavior.²⁴

Angelo's abhorrence of bastardy, which he describes as equal in seriousness to murder (II. iv. 42-49), was shared by many sixteenth and seventeenth authorities who, in the words of one historian, were "almost morbidly obsessed" with the subject.²⁵ This obsession could manifest itself in increasingly severe, even savage punishments of unwed fathers and, especially, unwed mothers:

Given the hostility of rate payers to "great bellied wenches," it is not surprising to find the treatment of sexual offenders becoming more severe. Before 1580, the only punishment for offenders—at least if they were willing to support the child—was a few hours in the stocks. Then, in 1588, the Quarter Sessions rolls record the first case of an unwed mother being whipped at the cart's tail, although the strokes were to be "moderately given." After 1600 the sentences grew harsher: women were to be whipped until their backs were bloody. After 1610 they were sent to the House of Correction for a year.²⁶

Since detecting the fathers of illegitimate children was extremely important to rate-payers, unwed mothers might also be subjected to harsh inquisitions during labor:

. . . in childbed they found themselves surrounded by midwives charged to refuse to assist them until they declared, often with the accompaniment of bloodcurdling oaths . . . the name of the father of the child. It is scarcely surprising that some girls faced with these terrors concealed their pregnancies, bore their children alone and then exposed, abandoned, or deliberately killed them.²⁷

Parents or others who gave sanctuary to unwed mothers and fathers risked prosecution by the church courts²⁸ and intimidation by local officials like an overseer who threatened to burn a mother's house down if she did not send her pregnant daughter out. The girl, like many unwed mothers, fled her community: her child was born in a barn in another town.²⁹ A. L. Beier writes that unwed mothers were often "encouraged" to take to the roads by parish officials, masters, and even by parents who wanted to rid themselves of the burden of "great bellied wenches" unable to support their children.³⁰ No more welcome in neighboring parishes than their own, unwed mothers might find themselves driven from one parish to another:

Elizabethan and early Stuart parishes engaged in long, expensive and cruel disputes in which mother and baby were shunted back and forth. The result was a great traffic of girls, their infants, and the fugitive fathers. Somerset girls went as far as Wales to have their bastards, and to London they came from all parts of the country.³¹

Considering the increasingly brutal treatment of bastard bearers in some English towns, Claudio's death sentence for bastardy, though a fiction, was not altogether implausible—particularly at a time when a person could be executed for the theft of a shilling.³²

Somewhat closer to reality is the harshness displayed towards Shakespeare's unwed mother by two of his Justices of the Peace. Publicly humiliated by being paraded through the streets, Juliet goes into labor in the city prison. Only at the intercession of the kindly Provost, who asks Angelo, "What shall be done, sir, with the groaning Juliet? / She's very near her hour," does the Deputy think to "Dispose of her / To some more fitter place, and that with speed. . . . See you the fornicatress be removed. / Let her have needful but not lavish means" (II. ii. 18-27). As she waits

for the Provost to conduct her to this place, she encounters the Duke in disguise. A common law justice usurping the role that properly belongs to a priest, he appoints himself her confessor, even though his primary purpose is not to minister to afflicted souls as he claims, but to discover the nature of the inmates' crimes so he can determine whether Angelo is enforcing Vienna's strict statutes as the Duke hopes. Later in the play, when he has learned greater humility and felt the first stirrings of love, the Duke will speak more like a true minister of souls to Barnardine ("Sir . . . I am come to advise you, comfort you, and pray with you" [IV. iii. 51-52]); however, during his interview with Juliet, there is no comfort or prayer in his mouth: much like Angelo, and in sharp contrast with the caring Provost who defends the couple against the law that has condemned them, the Duke is a self-righteous, "respectable" prosecutor and judge who puts Juliet's soul on trial.

The Duke's insensitivity in this scene is underscored by his heedlessness of the young woman's physical and emotional suffering. Not far removed from those who subjected actual unwed mothers to inquisitions during labor, the Duke questions, expostulates, and admonishes, heaping new agony on the girl when she most lacks the strength to bear it. The Duke begins to "minister" to Juliet's afflicted spirit by asking whether she repents "of the sin you carry" (II. iii. 19). The "sin" is that of her soul, but it is also the child she carries, who—as in Angelo's speech against "evils" hatched and born (II. ii. 95-104)—is condemned simply for coming to life. Apparently because Juliet bears her shame "most patiently" (II. iii. 20), the Duke decides her repentance may be false and begins a lesson in soul-searching: "I'll teach you how you shall arraign your conscience, / And try your penitence, if it be sound, / Or hollowly put on" (II. iii. 21-23). Not only does the Duke assume he knows the proper condition of Juliet's conscience, he believes he can see into the young woman's soul. Her response reflects her simple humility: "I'll gladly learn" (II. iii. 24). "Love you the man that wrong'd you?" the Duke asks (25), evidently trying to establish whether Juliet's penitence is genuine by implicitly asking her to reject Claudio, together with her sin. But she does not attempt to exonerate herself by turning against her husband: she answers that she loves Claudio as she loves herself, says the sin was mutually committed, but takes on the burden of blame. When the Duke then threatens to embark upon a lengthy sermon about the necessity for her to feel sorrow towards heaven, rather than sorrow for herself, Juliet effectively cuts him off: "I do repent me as it is an evil, / And take the shame with joy" (II. iii. 35-36).

Apparently satisfied at last with Juliet's admission of wrongdoing, the Duke goes on to say, "Your partner, as I hear, must die tomorrow, / And I am going with instruction to him. / Grace go with you, Benedicite!" (II. iii. 38-40). His blessing is all the more chilling considering he has at every moment the power to relieve Juliet's suffering by ordering his Deputy to rescind Claudio's death sentence. In contrast to the Provost, who seems to have kept from Juliet the information that Claudio is about to die, the Duke speaks almost casually of the impending execution, manifesting shocking indifference to the dangerous condition and feelings of the young woman who has only just spoken of her love for her "partner." In ministering to Juliet, the Duke robs her of all hope: "Must die tomorrow! O injurious love, / That respites me a life, whose very comfort / Is still a dying horror" (II. iii. 41-43). Her love is "injurious" because her pregnancy has given her the legal right to live, while Claudio, her life's comfort, is a "dying horror." The Provost's use of an ambiguous pronoun in his response to Juliet's tortured exclamation—"Tis pity of him" (II. iii. 43)—could be intentional on Shakespeare's part: given the Duke's conduct towards Juliet, we might wonder who deserves more pity: the overly passionate Claudio or the callously dispassionate justice.

The exchange between the Duke and Juliet reveals that the respectable Duke's "virtue," like that of his Deputy, is a meager, self-serving thing that pales beside the genuine love and patience of the unwed mother. Nowhere else in the play does she speak: however, through this brief exchange, Shakespeare seems determined to enlist our sympathies for Juliet. The audience is forced to look past the stereotypical image of the "great-bellied wench," threatening to burden rate-payers with her offspring, and see instead a suffering young woman who may be more worthy than the judges who condemn her.

The visible presence of the very pregnant Juliet combined with the several descriptions of Claudio's offense would undoubtedly have told a contemporary audience that the young couple, like many poor, unwed parents in England, were convicted for bastardy. If the offense is interpreted this way, the reasoning behind Isabella's plea for Angelo becomes clear. Claudio is unquestionably guilty of fathering an illegitimate child: "My brother had but justice, / In that he did the thing for which he died" (V. i. 456-57). On the other hand, she argues, Angelo's trial (in fact, a mock trial) centers on quite a different offense: the extortion of sexual favors from a woman in exchange for her brother's life.

For Angelo,
 His act did not o'ertake his bad intent,
 And must be buried but as an intent
 That perished by the way. Thoughts are no subjects,
 Intents are merely thoughts.

(V. i. 458-62)

Despite Angelo's "bad intent," he did not defile Isabella, but had intercourse with her willing substitute, his betrothed wife. Furthermore, because the bargain he offered Isabella was not fulfilled, Angelo did not renege on his promise when he ordered Claudio's execution. The law, Isabella rightly says, must judge the deeds of an individual, not his intentions or conceptions, however illegitimate. Thus, while Claudio was sentenced to die for a crime he did not intend but nevertheless did commit (bastardy), Angelo is exonerated for failing to commit the crime he intended (sexual extortion).

Isabella's speech has often been criticized for its "legalism." Ernest Schanzer, for example, writes that "Isabel is here pleading for a judicial pardon, and not on the Christian grounds of the need to show mercy . . . but on the legalistic grounds that Angelo is technically innocent of the crimes for which he is condemned to die."³³ However, Isabella's "legalism" seems entirely appropriate here. Her bastard-bearing brother's guilt under the law leaves Isabella no choice except to appeal for mercy, as she does earlier in the play. On the other hand, Angelo's innocence under the law makes a plea for mercy superfluous. Despite his intentions to the contrary, the Deputy failed to extort sexual favors from Isabella and must be acquitted if civil justice is to be served.

This is not to say the audience is likely to believe moral justice is served by Angelo's acquittal. On the contrary, Shakespeare seems determined to evoke the opposite response. Hawkins writes that *Measure for Measure* is largely designed to put Angelo in the same situation as the man he sentences to death ("When I, that censure him, do so offend, / Let mine own judgment pattern out my death").³⁴ Yet, rather than fulfill audience expectations in this regard, the play invites us to consider the moral justice of enforcing a statute that condemns one couple and exonerates another for the same act. Claudio and Juliet are convicted while Angelo and Mariana are acquitted—not because the law perceives any significant difference in their marriage contracts—but simply because Juliet became pregnant and Mariana, for all anyone knows, did not. Thus legal guilt under this statute depends upon the chance event of pregnancy. Intent is altogether irrel-

Isabella's Plea for Angelo in *Measure for Measure*

evant. Claudio's intent is to marry validly the woman he loves: Angelo's intent, on the other hand, is to defile a would-be nun.

As Isabella's plea suggests, the Viennese statute under which bastard-bearers are punished is inequitable because it allows for the same sexual conduct to be treated with drastically different legal consequences. England's bastardy statutes were no different. Not only were poor bastard-bearers far more likely to be prosecuted by justices than were those who could afford to support their illegitimate offspring, those, like Angelo, who engaged in fornication or antenuptial fornication but produced no children paid no criminal penalty for their conduct. The same was true of men like Lucio who escaped the law by denying their fatherhood.

In agreement with a number of other critics, T. F. Wharton says Shakespeare's play "depicts a moral experiment, with the Duke as the experimenter" and Angelo functioning as a sort of "second self" of the Duke.³⁵ Lucio serves as a ubiquitous reminder to Vincentio of why he deemed such an experiment necessary. As Marilyn Williamson points out, the fantastical gentleman is like those bastard-bearers described by Philip Stubbes in *The Anatomy Abuses* (1583) who, after impregnating women, "showes them a faire pair of haeles, and away he goeth."³⁶ Overdone reveals she is raising Lucio's child by Kate Keepdown, a woman to whom he promised marriage. Brought before the Duke "for getting a wench with child," Lucio denied being the father because "They would else have married me to the rotten medlar" (IV. iii. 168-69; 172). Having easily escaped detection, Lucio becomes convinced that in the Duke he has found a kindred spirit: "Ere he would have hang'd a man for the getting a hundred bastards, he would have paid for the nursing a thousand" (III. ii. 113-16). Judging from Lucio's case, the Duke's efforts to control bastardy failed because, having "ever loved the life removed" (I. iii. 8), he was too distant from his people to carry out a sufficiently close investigation of the facts. Tracing the failure of his government to his leniency rather than to his remoteness, he becomes convinced that stronger remedies are needed and appoints Angelo with the expectation that the "precise" Deputy will do what he himself has been reluctant to do: enforce Vienna's "strict statutes and most biting laws" (I. iii. 19). But long before the final scene, it becomes clear that the Duke's decision to set aside his earlier remedy for bastardy and employ a precise justice to turn sin into crime has been an experiment gone wrong. His "second self" uses his new power for the purpose of sexual extortion and sees to it that the only citizens to suffer severely

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under the strict statutes are a betrothed, unwed mother and a father who openly admits to his paternity. Rather than remedy the bastardy problem, the "strict statutes" contribute to it by preventing unwed parents who wish to marry from doing so and allowing bastard-bearers like Lucio to escape legitimizing their offspring.

On the other hand, the experiment does have its benefits. When he disguises himself as a friar and goes out among his subjects, the Duke eventually blunders upon an important lesson about governing. The effective justice is not one like the early Duke who has "ever lov'd the life removed" (I. iii. 8), values his reputation above all, and denies his own humanity. Rather, like Escalus of II. i., he is a patient investigator who allows himself to come into direct contact with members of the community in order to discover the truth. By coming to know those he rules, Vincentio not only learns the truth about Angelo, he accidentally gathers evidence against Lucio—something the Duke was remiss in doing when Kate Keepdown came before him. Armed with Overdone's testimony and Lucio's unwitting confession, the Duke, having abandoned his experiment, reverts to his old remedy for bastardy: forced marriage. On occasion, this remedy was used by actual justices of Shakespeare's age:

. . . it is known that, in the early modern period, Justices of the Peace (either at the petition of the pregnant woman, her representatives, or local Poor Law officers) sometimes coerced men into marrying women they had made pregnant as an alternative to being dealt with under the bastardy statutes.³⁷

In opposition to most members of the House of Commons and those justices who, at least where the poor were concerned, would turn sexual sin into crime, *Measure for Measure* seems to argue on behalf of applying the traditional remedy of the church, which, in the manner of the Duke of the final scene, used public humiliation and marriage to counteract bastardy.

Arthur C. Kirsch has written of *Measure for Measure* that "without an understanding of the play's ideas and their connotations for an Elizabethan audience, its dramatic experience is often inaccessible or unintelligible."³⁸ Interpreting Isabella's plea for Angelo in light of the bastardy statutes can help us appreciate the topical relevance of the play and make it somewhat more accessible and intelligible; however, this is not to say a contemporary audience would have found Isabella's defense of Angelo any less unsettling than we do. But perhaps a lingering sense of uneasi-

ness is built into the plea and *Measure for Measure* as a whole. From beginning to end, Shakespeare seems intent upon evoking audience sympathy for the very human Claudio and Juliet and growing hostility towards the judge who prosecutes their sin of bastardy to the full measure of the law. Perhaps by leaving their sense of moral justice unsatisfied at the close of the play, Shakespeare hoped to extend his audience's compassion from his fictional unwed parents to those of England, where, for years to come, justices would continue to prosecute some sexual offenders under statutes that put others guilty of the same or worse conduct safely beyond the law's grasp.

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Notes

¹All textual references are to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

²For discussions of marriage contracts, see, for example, J. Birje-Patil, "Marriage Contracts in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Studies*, 5 (1969), 106-11; Ernst Schanzer, "The Marriage Contracts in *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 13 (1960), 81-89; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "The Marriage Contracts in *Measure for Measure*: A Reconsideration," *Shakespeare Survey*, 32 (1979), 129-44.

³Harriet Hawkins, *Measure for Measure* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), pp. 20-21.

⁴Craig A. Bernthal, "Staging Justice: James I and the Trial Scenes of *Measure for Measure*," *Studies in English Literature*, 32 (1992), p. 262.

⁵Wentersdorf, p. 129.

⁶Though by pre- and post-Reformation church law, engaging in sexual intercourse between the time of contract and solemnization was considered sinful, country customs sometimes taught otherwise. In fact, for a couple to have relations prior to the "limit of solemnity" was on at least one court occasion defended as being required by "the common use and custom within the countie of Leicester." See John Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 45-46.

⁷Sir Edward Coke, *His Speech and Charge: With a Discourse of the Abuses and Corruption of Officers*. 1607. Facsimile Edition (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972), sig. H3. For a discussion of the belief on the part of parish and town officials that the alehouse was "an engine of impoverishment," see, for example, Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London: Longman Press, 1983), pp. 166-67.

⁸See Alan Macfarlane, "Illegitimacy and Illegitimates in English History," *Bastardy and Its Comparative History*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980), p. 73.

⁹Gillis, pp. 44-46. Since many alehouses featured sleeping rooms that could be used for casual sexual liaisons or the consummation of private spousals, the alehouse contributed to the high rate of illegitimacy in England; in quite the literal sense, the alehouse was, as it was termed by moralists, a "nurserie of naughtiness."

ness." For a discussion of the alehouse in *Measure for Measure*, see my essay, "Mistress Overdone's House," *Subjects on the World's Stage: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. David Allen and Robert White (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1995), 181-99.

¹⁰Martin Ingram, "Spousals Litigation in the English Ecclesiastical Courts c. 1350-c.1640," *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), pp. 35-38.

¹¹Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), p. 127.

¹²Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), p. 84.

¹³Wrightson, p. 84. See also Marilyn Williamson, *The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies* (Detroit: Wayne State Univ. Press, 1986), p. 82.

¹⁴*Byegones*, qtd. in Gillis, p. 23.

¹⁵For example, the age at which apprenticeships could be completed was fixed to prevent "over hastie marriages and oversone setting up of households of any by the youthe." Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family: 1470-1700* (London: Longman Press, 1984), p. 67. Furthermore, by withholding housing, employment, and rights of settlement, local authorities curtailed marriages by couples who might present a future charge on the poor rates (Gillis, pp. 86-87). Ingram writes that even the Church's requirement that banns be read could be used to prevent the poor from marrying: "ministers, in league with more substantial parishioners, frequently refused to read the banns or conduct marriages between poor people who might burden the poor rates. This practice was undoubtedly against the law of the Church, but apparently ministers who so acted were rarely prosecuted" (pp. 55-56).

¹⁶F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford: Essex County Council, 1973), 2-24.

¹⁷See Joan Kent, "Attitudes of Members of the House of Commons to the Regulation of 'Personal Conduct' in Late Elizabethan and Early Stuart England," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 46 (1973), 41-71.

¹⁸Milton, *The English Magistracy* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p.103.

¹⁹For examples of Justice Lambarde's attitude towards and judicial treatment of bastard bearers, see *William Lambarde and Local Government: His "Ephemeris" and Twenty-Nine Charges to Juries and Commissions*, ed. Conyers Read (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1962).

²⁰Kent writes that a 1593 proposal to empower justices to whip, stock, and jail unwed parents without regard to economic status met with strong opposition by the Commons on the grounds that, as one member argued, "gentlemen or men of quality" should not be "putt to such a shame" as to be whipped. Other members agreed, pronouncing such punishment "slavish" when brought against a "liberal man." The proposal was defeated. See 49-50.

²¹See William Lambarde's *Eirenarchia or the Office of the Justices of the Peace*. 1581. Fascimile Edition (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1970), pp. 63-64.

²²Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History 1200-1830* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 147-50.

²³Lambarde warned justices and juries that many bastard children were conceived at alehouses, "nurseries of nautiness," that attracted "wanton youths." *"Ephemeris" and Twenty-Nine Charges*, p. 70.

²⁴Cynthia Herrup, "Law and Morality in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present*, 106 (1985), pp. 104-05.

²⁵Milton, p. 103.

²⁶William Hunt, *The Puritan Moment* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), p. 76.

- ²⁷Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 86.
²⁸Emmison, p. 25ff.
²⁹Hunt, p. 75.
³⁰A. L. Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England 1560-1640* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 53.
³¹Beier, p. 53.
³²The play's several associations between Claudio's offense and theft suggest that Shakespeare may have had the draconian penalty for the theft of a shilling in mind.
³³Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 102.
³⁴Hawkins, p. 19.
³⁵T. F. Wharton, qtd. in Stephen Derry, "Time and Punishment in *Measure for Measure*," *Notes and Queries*, 41 (1994), p. 489.
³⁶Williamson, pp. 86-87, p. 82.
³⁷Ingram, p. 51.
³⁸Arthur Kirsch, "The Integrity of *Measure for Measure*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 28 (1975), p. 91.

All's Well That Ends Well: Shakespeare's Treatment of Anal Fistula by Bard C. Cosman

I. Introduction

Textual and contextual evidence suggests that the French king's fistula, a central plot device in *All's Well That Ends Well*, is a fistula in ano. Anal fistula was known to the lay public in Shakespeare's time. In addition, Shakespeare may have known of the anal fistula treatise of John Arderne, an ancestor on Shakespeare's mother's side. Shakespeare's use of anal fistula differs from all previous versions of the story, which first appeared in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, as well as from its possible historical antecedent, the fistula of Charles V of France. This difference makes sense given the conventions of Elizabethan comedy, which included anal humor. It is also understandable when one looks at what wounds in different locations mean in European legend. In this light, it is not surprising that subsequent expurgations treat Boccaccio's and Shakespeare's fistulas differently, censoring only Shakespeare's. This reading has implications for the staging of *All's Well That Ends Well*.

II. The *All's Well* Fistula

All's Well That Ends Well uses a cure for fistula as a central plot device. In Shakespeare's story, the king of France suffers from a long-standing fistula, the site of which is never explicitly stated. Helena, a commoner and the daughter of the deceased physician Gerard de Narbon, promises the king a cure in two days if he will grant her the choice of a husband. He agrees, and she cures his fistula, using a secret remedy she has inherited from her father.

The king's fistula is introduced in the first scene, in an exchange between Bertram and Lafew:

Bertram. What is it, my good lord, the king
languishes of?

Lafew. A fistula, my lord.

Bertram. I heard not of it before.

(I. i. 31-34)¹

An incomplete but representative survey of standard Shakespeare editions reveals that scholarly editors are unsure of

the nature of the fistula, whose cure is the focus of the play's first two acts. It is described as an ulcer, an abscess, a species of ulcer, an ulcerous sore, a sinuous ulcer, a long, flute-shaped abscess, a long, pipe-like ulcer, and "a swelling on the breast, aggravated by neglect."² There is only a little crossover between literary and medical interpretations of the fistula; some literary editors cite Bucknill (see below) to substantiate the non-specific nature of the ailment.³

This is an example of non-communication between what C. P. Snow calls the "two cultures," namely the sciences and the humanities.⁴ In fact, there is considerable medical literature on the subject, much of which remains unread by Shakespeare scholars. There was no such literary-medical division in the English Renaissance, however, and it is of both literary and medical-historical interest to consider the location of the king's fistula.

III. Physicians Address the Fistula

Many physicians have reviewed the medical references in Shakespeare. A literature search on medicine in Shakespeare reveals more than two hundred articles and books in eight languages, ranging from short lists of topical quotations to J. W. L. Crostill's monumental, annotated compendium of 1,748 references.⁵

For some of the medical commentators, as for their literary colleagues, the location of the fistula does not matter or remains unguessed. Dr. B. Rush Field cites the fistula as a central device of *All's Well That Ends Well*, commenting only: "Many surgical subjects receive but little attention from him [Shakespeare]." Surgeon R. R. Simpson concentrates on the portrayal of doctors, devoting his attention to Gerard de Narbon and the unorthodox prescription that Helena inherits, but never mentioning the fistula itself. Pediatrician Luke Ellenburg puts it in the category of "undiagnosed disease," adding the unlikely suggestion that the king may have had coronary disease. Medical writers too numerous to cite mention the fistula and let it pass without further comment.⁶

Some physicians take a less than serious approach, perhaps appropriate to the comedy they are describing. In his tongue-in-cheek compendium *Shakespearean Medicine, Modernized*, Dr. William Turnley says, "I don't know what kind of fistula my lord had in *All's Well That Ends Well*, but he wasn't well, and all isn't well that ends well. Oh, well!" Family practitioner Aubrey Kail quips: "We cannot blame Bertram for not hearing of a fistula before. He

probably had more interesting things to worry about. . . ." Anatomist Arthur Meyer simply classes Helena's fistula cure as an "extravagant expression."⁷

A few medical writers locate the fistula in the anus, making the assumption that since anal fistula is by far the most prevalent type, the term "fistula" means anal fistula by default. An example is the shockingly bigoted gynecologist J. Portman Chesney, who equates Helena to the female practitioners and itinerant "negro" quacks who purveyed fistula cures in his times. Writing for fellow physicians in 1884, he does not need to spell out *fistula in ano*. Dr. Charles W. Stearns makes the assumption more clearly: "The poet selected a disease, which was at once painful and almost incurable; and which yet admitted of the patient's going about without much apparent disability. It is a disease that, more than any other, might make the greatest monarch feel (as it did Louis XIV half a century after Shakespeare's time) that he too was but a man." Louis XIV of France was cured of an anal fistula in 1686. Chilean physician-humanist Alejandro Garretón discusses "anorectal" fistula, notes that "many kings suffered from fistula," and suspects that Shakespeare does not show the king's "disagreeable" symptoms because those are things "one does not speak of." In Marvin Corman's current textbook *Colon and Rectal Surgery*, the interchange between Bertram and Lafew is the epigram for the chapter on anal fistula.⁸

Some medical critics expressly reject an anal location for the fistula. In the most widely cited compendium of Shakespeare's medical references, psychiatrist John C. Bucknill states: "A fistula at the present day means an abscess external to the rectum, but in Shakespeare's day it was used in the more general signification for a burrowing abscess in any situation."⁹ Published in 1860, this statement has thrown literary commentators off the scent for more than a hundred years. Bucknill is at best partially correct: in Shakespeare's time, "fistula" meant a *draining* sinus or tract. A typical sixteenth century definition is Ruscelli's "all manner of cankers, diseases, or sores, which come of a putrified humour, and runne continually, commonlie called Fistules."¹⁰ The unmodified term "fistula" most commonly referred to fistula in ano.

Medical commentators who know the origins of the *All's Well That Ends Well* story assume, based on Boccaccio, that the king's fistula was thoracic. Internist John Moyes states: "The 'fistula' here spoken of was not the common form technically called 'fistula in ano.'" He justifies this denial of the seemingly obvious by referring to Painter's explicit description, defining it as a chronically draining empyema (chest infection) or a sinus from an

infected rib. In their separate articles on Shakespeare's medicine, Drs. Arthur Jacobson and Max Kahn agree on a diagnosis of empyema. Internist John Wainwright explains: "This fistula was not the familiar fistula in ano, but a fistula in the chest resulting from empyema." Pulmonologist Walter Vest states explicitly: "From Boccaccio, the source of the plot, we know. . . the actual condition was a draining chest sinus, a sequela of an empyema necessitatis." Surgeon Alban Doran also refers to historical chronicles of Charles V of France to support the interpretation that the fistula was thoracic. Thus, if there ever was a medical consensus on the subject, it is that the *All's Well That Ends Well* fistula was a draining empyema, a purulent infection of the chest.¹¹ However, none of these medical commentators looks further into the text of the play itself for clues that confirm or deny this assumption.

These well-informed medical writers rely too heavily on other sources and not enough on the primary text. In this case, I believe that the physicians who know less about literature and history are closer to the mark. Evidence in the text of *All's Well That Ends Well* supports the contention that Shakespeare indeed had an anal fistula in mind, and thus that he consciously broke with the tradition of Boccaccio and his followers.

IV. Textual Evidence For Fistula in Ano

Although modern editors and medical commentators may not recognize the anal fistula, the Elizabethan audience probably did. In this section we will examine the references to the anus in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Then we will establish that "fistula" was a commonplace term recognizable to—even expected by—the average playgoer.

Shakespeare's intention is suggested in the introductory passage cited above: Bertram's "I heard *not* of it *before*" [italics added] may be interpreted easily as "I *have* heard of it *behind*." It is certainly not asking too much of Shakespeare or his audience to extract a positive meaning from a statement denying its opposite.

Beyond this suggestive introduction, the text of *All's Well That Ends Well* contains several more or less oblique references to the anus. There is the pervasive use of the word "end," which can mean "bottom." Helena says, "All's well that ends well; still the fine's the crown / Whate'er the course, the end is the renown" (IV. iv. 36-37) and "All's well that ends well yet" (V. i. 25). The king echoes this when he says, "All is well ended" (epilogue), and it does not require an imaginative leap to hear "a well end" or

"end's well," recalling the cure of the king's nether region. The statement "the fine's the crown" (IV. iv. 35) emphasizes the connection between the king (crown) and the word meaning "end" (fine). Critics have discussed the emphasis on ends in *All's Well That Ends Well*;¹² given the several other allusions to the anus detailed below, one might suspect that these "ends" are to be taken literally as well as figuratively.

The contrast between the low social status of the clever and virtuous commoner Helena and her high aspiration and achievement leads the king to offer an epigram that could be a motto for proctologists everywhere: "From lowest place, where virtuous things proceed / The place is dignified by the doer's deed" (II. iii. 124-25). Coming from the lips of one recently cured of a fistula, this can easily be read as a reference to the fistula's physical location in the "lowest place"—possibly the genitals but more likely the anus. Once again it requires interpreting a statement literally as well as figuratively; double meanings derived in this way are a standard device in Shakespeare's work.

Another reference describes the king's doctors' abandonment of his case: "the schools / Embowelled of their doctrine, have left off / The danger to itself" (I. iii. 235-37). Whether this refers to the Galenic doctrine that the "schools" (colleges of physicians) have internalized, or whether *embowelled* should be interpreted as *disembowelled*—that is, the schools have been emptied of useful doctrine in this case¹³—there is a clear reference to bowel, probably pertinent. When the king agrees to let Helena try to cure his fistula, he says, "Sweet practiser, thy physic I will try" (II. i. 185). "Physic" was both a non-specific term for medicine and a specific term for an enema.

The clown Lavatch refers to the anus and surrounding regions in his often-pungent repartee: in a conversation apparently unrelated to the king's fistula, the clown Lavatch tells the Countess that his all-purpose answer to her questions "is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks: the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn-buttock, or any buttock" (II. ii. 16-18). Aside from describing the social levelling that occurs at the barber's (echoing a Renaissance proverb), this passage may refer to a barber-surgeon accommodating the different rear-end physiognomies of various types of people.

Speaking in puns, Lavatch makes a reference to hemorrhoids when he remarks on the scar on Bertram's face, which is dressed with a velvet bandage: "His left cheek is a cheek of two pile and a half, but his right cheek is worn bare" (IV. v. 93-95). This joke plays on the pile, or knap, of velvet, and the term "pile" meaning

hemorrhoid. "Cheek" meant buttock, as it does today. Shakespeare makes the identical pun in *Measure for Measure*, which was written during the same period.¹⁴

The scurrilous Lavatch issues a string of scatological jokes when he taunts Parolles, who returns disgraced from the wars:

Parolles. . . . I am now, sir, muddied in Fortune's mood, and smell somewhat strong of her strong displeasure.

Clown. Truly, Fortune's displeasure is but sluttish if it smell so strongly as thou speakest of. I will henceforth eat no fish of Fortune's buttering. Prithee, allow the wind.

Parolles. Nay, you need not to stop your nose, sir. I spake but a metaphor.

Clown. Indeed, sir, if your metaphor stink I will stop my nose, or against any man's metaphor. Prithee, get thee further.

Parolles. Pray you, sir, deliver me this paper.

Clown. Foh! Prithee stand away. A paper from Fortune's close-stool, to give to a nobleman! . . . Here is a pur of Fortune's, sir . . .

(V. ii. 4-19)

This exchange, which has been described as "lavatorial word-play," contains references to feces (the old term "pur" and the pun of "mood" with "mute," another old term for excrement), flatus ("wind"), toilet paper ("paper from Fortune's close-stool"), and the bottom (the pun of "buttering" and "butt").¹⁵

Given all the anal and scatological references in *All's Well That Ends Well*, it is reasonable to assume that the fistula around which the action centers is intended to be the common fistula in ano rather than a more esoteric lesion like a thoracic fistula. This would explain one of Shakespeare's departures from Boccaccio's original story, in which the king bares his breast to the young woman healer, showing her his fistula. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Helena examines the fistula offstage, as befits a lesion in a private part.¹⁶

Textual evidence *against* an anal location for the fistula is scant. One critic sees the king's comment, ". . . my heart will not confess he owes [owns] the malady that doth my life besiege," as corroboration that Shakespeare was following Boccaccio (see below) by placing the fistula in the chest—near the heart, therefore "owned" by it.¹⁷ This is the only such reference.

Another possible location for the fistula is in the king's hand. This is the location favored by F. David Hoeniger, the most thorough of the non-medical scholars who tackles this issue, and

the only one who makes a case for an anal location as I do. After being cured by her, the king gives Helena his hand to confirm his promise: ". . . with this healthful hand, whose banished sense / Thou has repealed, a second time receive / The confirmation of my promised gift" (II. iii. 47-49). If this is read literally, it suggests the fistula was in his hand; if metaphorically, it simply suggests that he is now healthy and can use his powers, once more "ruling with a strong hand."¹⁸

The text of *All's Well That Ends Well* contains a preponderance of suggestions that the king's fistula is indeed a fistula in ano, and only one or two unconvincing ones to the contrary. Was this apparent to the Elizabethan audience?

V. Fistula Was A Commonplace Term in Elizabethan England

Shakespeare's medical knowledge has been the subject of considerable scholarship, much of which has been contributed by physicians. It is generally agreed that his works contain accurate clinical observations and up-to-date terms from Elizabethan medicine, and there is much speculation on where he got his informal medical education. Attention has focused on Shakespeare's son-in-law John Hall, a physician prominent enough to have his casebooks published posthumously (translated from Latin by the surgeon James Cooke). However, Hall did not marry Susanna Shakespeare until 1607, about four years after *All's Well That Ends Well* was written. While he does describe cases of hemorrhoids and "arse-gut fallen out" (rectal prolapse), John Hall does not mention fistula in his wide-ranging book of selected cases,¹⁹ perhaps because fistulas were primarily cared for by barber-surgeons.

Much of the discussion of Shakespeare's medical knowledge is based on the incorrect assumption that medicine was as distant from everyday life, and medical vocabulary as unknown to the layperson, in Elizabethan as in more recent times. A survey of Elizabethan dramatists suggests that Shakespeare's contemporaries also displayed what one today would consider unusual medical knowledge and vocabulary for non-physicians. They use it for dramatic effect, and, in the case of references to the anus, for low comedy. For example, Massinger, Heywood, Middleton, and Webster all use the term "colon" without explanation in their comedies, something a playwright might hesitate to do today.²⁰

Humorous references to enemas appear in at least six of Middleton's plays and in Shakespeare's *Othello*. In Heywood's

play *The Four P's* (circa 1544), an apothecary touts an ointment for fistula, then tells of a farcical cure of epilepsy with an anal plug (and explosive results). In his 1652 play *The Widow*, Middleton has his "empiric" tout cures for "Fistula in ano, ulcer, megrim / Or what disease soe'er beleaguer 'em." Scatological humor was standard in contemporary comedy—one would be surprised if Shakespeare's comedies did not contain it—and fistula was part of its vocabulary.²¹

This type of humor works only if the audience knows the vocabulary, and it is clear from its repeated use in non-medical literature that the term "fistula" was not reserved for physicians and surgeons. Fistulas occasioned debate among doctors, and the educated populace knew the subjects, if not all the details, of the day's medical controversies. In his 1589 text on poetry and rhetoric *The Arte of English Poesie*, Puttenham describes French courtiers feigning illness to get away from court intrigues, complaining of "fistule in ano, or some such other secret disease." In his 1596 book for the general public *The Keye of Philosophie*, John Hester describes topical medications "good against all cankers, fistilowes, the wolfe, and such like. . ." ²²

Historian Richard Stensgaard points out that *All's Well That Ends Well* was written at the time of the Plague of 1603, when there was much public talk of medical matters and in particular the controversy between the Galenist and Paracelsan schools. He places Helena (and Shakespeare) in the Paracelsan camp and points out that the emphasis on the fistula in *All's Well* may relate to a spate of pamphlets published in London in 1603-04 attacking and defending the use of arsenic amulets against plague; the Paracelsan Peter Turner mentions fistulas prominently in his listing of "Arsenicall diseases." Although Stensgaard does not comment directly on the location of the fistula in *All's Well That Ends Well*, he implies that it may be a draining inguinal lymph node, the "bubo" of bubonic plague.²³ While this theory is attractive historically, there is no textual evidence to support it.

It is clear that the Elizabethan audience expected to hear and were likely to understand terms such as fistula. In search of a definite location for the fistula in *All's Well That Ends Well*, one must consider the possible influence on Shakespeare of a forbear whose interest and achievements were specifically in the area of anal fistula.

VI. Shakespeare and John Arderne

John Arderne (1307-90) was the best-known English surgeon

of medieval times (Figure 1). Acknowledged in England as the "Father of Coloproctology," he graces the coat of arms of the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (Figure 2). He was a master surgeon who practiced at Newark in Nottinghamshire until 1370, and in London thereafter. Information about his background is sketchy, but he appears to have been to medical school at Montpellier and to have participated in several military campaigns in France before returning to England, where he attracted an international clientele with complex surgical problems. He is best known for his *Treatises of Fistula in Ano; Haemorrhoids, and Clysters* (1376), in which he described fistulotomy (cutting open the fistula) and seton placement (putting an encircling drain through the fistula), operations still current today.²⁴ This manuscript was copied many times, both in English and in the original Latin, and it appeared in print after the invention of the printing press.

Also known as John of Arderne, John de Arderne, and John Arden (reflecting the standard permutations of the name), he was part of the Arden family, of which much has been written since it produced William Shakespeare. This family is traceable to the tenth century and included branches in Cheshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Yorkshire.²⁵ Shakespeare's mother Mary Arden was from the Warwickshire branch, and he used the family name for the idyllic Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*.

Despite the diligence of Arderne's biographer (the surgeon D'Arcy Power) and Shakespeare's several genealogists, it is not clear to what branch of the family John Arderne belonged. The family association between Arderne and Shakespeare has been noted previously: in 1901 by genealogist Charlotte C. Stopes, who makes no connection to *All's Well That Ends Well*, and in 1992 by the historian F. David Hoeniger, in his discussion of the king's fistula.²⁶

In Elizabethan times, John Arderne was a famous medical figure from two centuries prior, whose work was still current and respected. If the young Shakespeare were taught about his Arden forbears at all, he would have learned about John Arderne. It is reasonable to speculate that, in the process of reinventing Boccaccio's story for use in *All's Well That Ends Well*, Shakespeare may have turned to his ancestor's treatise on fistula, which was conveniently in print at the time: *Treatises of Fistula in Ano* was republished in a printed edition in London in 1588.²⁷

VII. Previous Versions Locate Fistula Elsewhere

The basic plot of *All's Well That Ends Well* is lifted from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1353). The theme for the third day of the *Decameron*, chosen by "Queen" Neifile, is desires achieved or lost things recovered. Neifile herself tells about Gileta of Narbona (Shakespeare renames her Helena of Narbon), who cures a French king's fistula using a herbal remedy (Day III, Novella 9).²⁸

Boccaccio explicitly states that the fistula is *nel petto*, in or on the king's chest, and he depicts the king baring his chest for Gileta's examination.²⁹ This location for a king's wound involves specific symbolism. Before discussing this, I will trace the location of the fistula in the intermediary versions of the story between Boccaccio and Shakespeare.

Several translations and works deriving from Boccaccio appeared during the intervening 250 years, and scholars debate which ones Shakespeare used in writing *All's Well That Ends Well*. Bernardo Accolti's 1494 verse drama *La Virginia*, based specifically on *Decameron* III.9, locates the fistula in the king's arm (*nel braccio*). Scholars remain divided as to whether Shakespeare could read Italian; if not, one may dismiss Accolti (and the original Boccaccio) as sources. The 1545 French translation of Boccaccio by Antoine Le Maçon, which Shakespeare may have used, misplaces the fistula in the king's stomach (*estomach*). An English version of the *Decameron*, to which Shakespeare certainly had access, was William Painter's 1566 *Palace of Pleasure*. Painter follows Boccaccio, in that his French king has "a swelling on his breast, which by reason of ill cure was grown to be a Fistula."³⁰

This was the literature Shakespeare had to work with in adapting *Decameron* III.9 as an Elizabethan comedy: the only constant is that the king's illness is a fistula, and it is located on the trunk. However, there was also a historical French king with a fistula, the extent of whose influence on Shakespeare (or on the other writers) is unclear.

VIII. Charles V's Fistula

Boccaccio and his followers may have been describing a historical lesion, the fistula of King Charles V ("Charles the Wise") of France (1338-80). The nature of this lesion is elusive: Christine de Pizan notes that Charles was sickly and had intermittent fevers throughout his short life, and that at age thirty he had a swollen hand. Jean Froissart describes Charles's lesion specifically as "a small fistula on his arm," felt to be due to poisoning (as

were many organic lesions in medieval times). Having cured the young Charles of a near-fatal, acute illness associated with the fistula, an unnamed physician, sent by "the emperor of Rome," warned Charles that if the fistula stopped draining, he would die in fifteen days. "He bore the fistula for 23 years" before this accurate prediction came to pass. This disease could be the draining empyema favored by medical commentators (see above), or any of several chronic infections of skin or lymph nodes that are most common around the underarm or shoulder. Froissart's English translator obscures medical detail by calling the lesion a "lytell pype," which is an accurate rendition of the Latin *fistula* but does not correspond to a medical term of any period.³¹

The most learned student of the king's case, the psychiatrist Auguste Brachet, views the fistula as an osteoperiostitis (bone infection) due to typhoid fever, and he derides the theory that it was related to Charles's eventual demise. He also dates the onset of illness to the period 1357-61. If Boccaccio were really writing about Charles V's fistula, it must have appeared several years earlier than any chronicler states, as the *Decameron* was published in 1353. It remains unusually coincidental that Boccaccio would have created a fictional French king with a fistula shortly before the real French king developed one. In any event, chroniclers agree that Charles V was chronically ill and had a draining sinus of his hand or arm. He is known to have had a long-standing interest in medicine, with various therapeutic devices in his royal inventory and sixty volumes on medicine and surgery in his library.³²

There is another interesting connection between Charles V and the *All's Well That Ends Well* fistula. Froissart's unnamed doctor sent from Italy was likely the astrologer-physician Thomas of Pizzano, who came to Charles's court from Venice in 1368. Thomas' daughter was the renowned Christine de Pizan, the first professional woman writer since antiquity and a chronicler of Charles' reign. Although her description of Charles' death (which her father likely attended) lacks medical detail, she does demonstrate the currency in non-medical literature of the word "fistula" for a draining, non-healing wound: in her *La Vision-Christine*, an allegorical lady worries metaphorically that her "wounds, by fault of cure, will become infistulated and incurable." One prominent critic suggests that Christine, with her legendary resourcefulness and unapologetic feminism, was the model for Shakespeare's Helena. By extension, this would make her father the model for Boccaccio's Gerardo of Narbona, which is not impossible given Thomas's contemporary fame.³³

By placing the fistula in the king's anus, Shakespeare made a break with both the literary tradition of Boccaccio and the historical tradition surrounding Charles V. I will discuss why after a brief overview of wounded-king iconography.

IX. Wound Archetypes and the *All's Well* Fistula

Wounds have been of interest throughout history for symbolic as well as practical reasons. Non-healing wounds excited special interest in pre-modern times, as they violated the general observation that a wound would either heal or kill the patient. A non-healing wound, particularly that of a king, has a long tradition in European legend.

Pre-Christian myths of fertility and sacrifice have their expression in the medieval legend of the Fisher King, the guardian of the Holy Grail who suffered from illness and infertility because of a non-healing wound. In the two seminal versions of this legend, Chrétien de Troyes's *Perceval, ou le Conte du Graal* (circa 1175) and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* (early 1200's), the wound is described as between the thighs (i. e., probably genital) and through the scrotum, respectively. By sympathetic extension, the Fisher King's country is also blighted and is called the Waste Land. Accolti's *Virginia* borrows from this tradition when the king describes his dominion of Parthenope as threatened by his fistula. Recent renditions of this legend include T. S. Eliot's poem "The Waste Land," Bernard Malamud's novel *The Natural*, and Terry Gilliam's movie *The Fisher King*. The Fisher King and his dominions can be healed through the offices of a purified knight, who is Percival or Galahad of Arthurian legend. Although the Fisher King's wound is often placed, in deference to modern sensibilities, on the hand or elsewhere, its genital location in these early texts clarifies its connection to fertility.³⁴

A second tradition surrounds a king wounded on the trunk, usually the chest. Christian tradition has it that Jesus was pierced in the right chest by the spear of Longinus. This wound was the subject of much emphasis in medieval illustration and literature, appearing as a breast-like source of nutrition to saints or a vagina-like orifice from which the Church was born.³⁵ Thus a wound in the chest, such as that of Boccaccio's fictional French king (and possibly that of the revered Charles V), could be seen as a virtuous, even miraculous *imitatio Christi*.

Finally, the sick or wounded king would be recognizable to the Elizabethan audience as one of the central symbols of alchemical lore. The sick king was the base metal, which through proper

manipulations could be "healed" and restored to its pure, unadulterated form as the king of metals, gold.³⁶ There is ample evidence in *All's Well That Ends Well* that Shakespeare recognized this aspect of his story, including a mention of Paracelsus, the sixteenth century alchemist and wound surgeon (II. iii. 11).

In using Boccaccio's story but changing the location of the fistula, Shakespeare partook of these traditions. By relocating it away from the chest, he virtually removed its function as a Christ-like stigma. By locating the fistula in the anus, he retained both the alchemical aspect of the non-healing wound and the infertility/impotence aspect of a private wound. Helena's healing of the anal fistula is brought anatomically closer to the older, fertility-ritual stories, emphasizing the sexual aspect of her interaction with the king. Why, then, anal as opposed to genital? Because unlike Boccaccio and his followers, who were telling a dramatic story in a medieval context, Shakespeare was crafting a comedy according to Elizabethan conventions. The bathroom banter and repeated references to the anus are what one would expect from the reworking of a medieval story into a typical Elizabethan comedy.

X. Subsequent Literature

Subsequent rewritings and expurgations of Shakespeare's text, each of which attempts to "clean up" Shakespeare for the audience of its time, provide the strong suggestion that the king's fistula was in a private part, not suitable for polite discussion. Thus, despite the emphasis Shakespeare gives it in the original, the word "fistula" is routinely censored, leaving the king's illness undefined. In J. P. Kemble's text, used for performance in the early nineteenth century, the fistula has been excised. Thomas Bowdler's infamous *Family Shakespeare*, in which "those words and expressions are omitted which cannot with propriety be read in a family," also omits the fistula.³⁷

The fistula suffers the same fate in prose retellings of Shakespeare's stories, usually written for young people: in Charles and Mary Lamb's 1807 *Tales from Shakespeare*, the king's ailment is just "a sad malady." Other subsequent prose retellings describe the king's fistula as "a lingering illness, which made him lame" or a "mortal illness." The only exception is Nicolas Bentley's jocular *Tales from Shakespeare* (1972), which uses an anal fistula (as I believe Shakespeare did) to enhance the comedy: ". . . the King has got a fistula, not a malady that is usually referred to in polite society, but as the Countess hasn't a clue about where a fistula

usually gets you, she is none the wiser." Later, the king "says he will give the prescription a try. In fact he'll try anything at the moment because he can't even sit down . . ." ³⁸

In sharp contrast to rewritings of Shakespeare, subsequent editions and translations of the *Decameron* retain an explicit fistula. The first English translation, published in 1620 and attributed to John Florio, puts the king's fistula's "on his stomacke," following Le Maçon.³⁹ Most other translators follow Boccaccio's original text and place the fistula in the chest. Since Shakespeare's expurgators unanimously censor the fistula, one would expect something similar to happen in Boccaccio's case, especially given the bawdy and explicit nature of much of the *Decameron*. This is not the case, however: while subsequent editions and translations (too numerous to cite here) do change or delete entire sections of the *Decameron* to suit the perceived sensibilities of their audiences, the king's fistula remains firmly in place.

Thus the literary traditions that follow the *Decameron* fistula and the *All's Well* fistula are divergent: the former has been considered unobjectionable, the latter something to be censored. We can learn something about the authors' intentions by viewing their works through the humorless eyes of the expurgators: Shakespeare's fistula is recognized, however dimly, as a trespass upon forbidden ground, while Boccaccio's fistula, with its imitation of Christ's wound, is beyond reproach.

XI. *All's Well* in Performance

A quandary faced by any director preparing a production of *All's Well That Ends Well* is how to stage act two, scene one, in which Helena faces the king and convinces him to accept her ministrations. It becomes important for director and actors to decide what (and where) the fistula is, and what it implies for the king's health. Helena may be played as an efficient nurse caring for a handicapped king, a bawdy wench reawakening the lusts of a sick but lascivious king, or any one of many other possible roles.⁴⁰ If one believes that the king suffers from a non-specific, near-fatal illness, one will create a solemn or mystical scene along lines that have become traditional (Figure 3). If, however, one accepts that the king has an anal fistula, the scene should be pregnant with low humor, with a smirking Helena and a comically uncomfortable king (Figure 4). This, in my view, fits better with the text and with Shakespeare's intentions.

XII. Conclusions

Examples of both textual and historical evidence strongly suggest that the king's fistula in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is intended to be a fistula in ano. While this may be no surprise to the practicing surgeon, for whom the unmodified term "fistula" still means anal fistula, it runs counter to accepted scholarly wisdom and to the interpretation of physician commentators who have assumed that the fistula was thoracic. Shakespeare's relocation of the fistula represents an interesting break with Boccaccio and his followers and is understandable in the light of Elizabethan comedy conventions and the symbolic meaning of the two sites. Directors staging *All's Well That Ends Well* may wish to temper the seriousness with which the scene between the king and Helena is usually played, making it a less solemn and more comical encounter.

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Notes

Thanks to Jeremy Parzen and Michele Zorzi for Italian, Renate Pilz for German, Garrison Tong for Spanish, and Maciej Kieturakis for Polish translations. Also thanks to Amie Lee and the staff of the UCSD Library, and Jane Siegel of the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, for their patience and service.

¹*All's Well That Ends Well*, ed. Barbara Everett, New Penguin Shakespeare (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970). All citations are from this edition.

²These definitions are noted in twentieth century editions of *All's Well That Ends Well*: The Folger Library General Reader's Shakespeare, ed. Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. LaMar (New York: Pocket, 1965); *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. George B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1952), p. 1020; Everett, p. 152; *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1980), p. 429; The Yale Shakespeare, ed. Arthur E. Case (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1926); The New Cambridge Shakespeare, ed. Russell Fraser, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), p. 42; *The Annotated Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred L. Rowse, vol. 1, The Comedies (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1978), p. 638; The Works of Shakespeare, vol. 1, ed. W. Osbourne Brigstocke (London: Methuen, 1904).

³The Arden Shakespeare, ed. G. K. Hunter (London: Methuen, 1959), p. 5; The Oxford Shakespeare, ed. Susan Snyder (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), p. 80.

⁴Charles P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959).

⁵J. W. L. Croffill, "Classified Medical References in the Works of Shakespeare," Parts I-XIV, *Journal of the Royal Naval Medical Service*, 38 (1952), 113-30, 193-209; 39 (1953), 15-36, 96-112, 240-51; 40 (1954), 12-29, 139-49; 41 (1955), 35-53, 149-67; 42 (1956), 23-36, 166-75; 43 (1957), 76-88; 44 (1958), 44-55, 181-91. See also the

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⁶For medical interpretations of the *All's Well That Ends Well* fistula as a non-specific condition, see B. Rush Field, *Medical Thoughts of Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Easton, Pennsylvania: Andrews & Clifton, 1885), p. 55; Robert R. Simpson, *Shakespeare and Medicine* (Edinburgh: E&S Livingstone, 1959), pp. 71-74, pp. 119-21; and Luke L. Ellenburg, Sr., *Man's Temporal Profile with Shakespearean References of Medical Interest* (New York: Vantage, 1979), pp. 222-23.

⁷For jocular interpretations, see William H. Turnley, *Shakespearean Medicine, Modernized* (New York: Vantage, 1968), p. 137; Aubrey C. Kail, "The Doctors in Shakespeare's Plays," Part Two, *Australian Family Physician*, 19 (1990), 372-77; and Arthur W. Meyer, "Some Characteristics of the Medicine in Shakespeare," *Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital*, 18 (1907), 1-11.

⁸For medical views of the fistula as an anal problem, see J. Portman Chesney, *Shakespeare as a Physician* (Chicago: J. H. Chambers, 1884), 202-03; Charles W. Stearns, *Shakespeare's Medical Knowledge* (New York: D. Appleton, 1865; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1973), p. 28; Alejandro Garretón Silva, *La Medicina en la Obra de William Shakespeare* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1981), 136-37; and Marvin L. Corman, *Colon and Rectal Surgery*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1993), p. 133.

⁹John C. Bucknill, *The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare* (London: Longman, 1860; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1971), p. 96.

¹⁰Girolamo Ruscelli, *The Secretes of the Reverende Maister Alexis of Piemount*, trans. W. Warde (London: John Kingstone for Nicolas Inglande, 1558; facsimile edition, Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson, 1975), fol. 11.

¹¹For medical interpretations of the *All's Well That Ends Well* fistula as a chest condition, see John Moyes, *Medicine & Kindred Arts in the Plays of Shakespeare* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1896), pp. 75-76; Arthur J. Jacobson, "The Medical Knowledge of Shakespeare," *The Critic and Guide*, September 1909, unpaginated; Max Kahn, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of Medicine," *New York Medical Journal*, 42 (1910), pp. 863-66; John W. Wainwright, *The Medical and Surgical Knowledge of William Shaksper* (New York: The Author, 1915), p. 28; Walter E. Vest, "Shakespeare's Knowledge of Chest Diseases," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 144 (1950), pp. 1232-34; and two works by Alban H. G. Doran: *Shakespeare and the Medical Society* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1899), pp. 10-11 and "Medicine," in *Shakespeare's England; An Account of the Life & Manners of His Age*, vol. I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1916), 413-43.

¹²Ian Donaldson, "All's Well That Ends Well: Shakespeare's Play of Endings," *Essays in Criticism*, 27 (1977), 34-55.

¹³Hunter, p. 33.

¹⁴*Measure for Measure*, ed. Ralph E. C. Houghton, The New Clarendon Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), p. 32 (I. ii. 31-34).

¹⁵Everett, p. 208.

¹⁶F. David Hoeniger, *Medicine and Shakespeare in the English Renaissance* (Newark, Delaware: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1992), p. 288.

¹⁷Snyder, p. 80.

¹⁸Hoeniger, p. 297.

¹⁹For discussions of John Hall's possible influence on Shakespeare, see Simpson, pp. 91-126; and Harriet Joseph, *Shakespeare's Son-in-Law: John Hall, Man and Physician* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1964). Hall's casebook is *Select Observations on English Bodies, or, Cures both Empiricall and Historicall Performed upon Very Eminent Persons in Desperate Diseases*, trans. James Cooke (London: James Sherley,

1657).

²⁰Harold Bayley, *The Shakespeare Symphony: An Introduction to the Ethics of Elizabethan Drama* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1906), p. 128.

²¹For Elizabethan anal humor, see *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. Arthur H. Bullen (New York: AMS, 1964), vol. 5, p. 200, and throughout; *Othello*, ed. Norman Sanders, *The New Cambridge Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 92 (II. i. 171); *The Dramatic Writings of John Heywood*, ed. John S. Farmer (Guildford: Charles W. Traylen, 1966), p. 46, pp. 50-51.

²²For Elizabethan mentions of fistula, see George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589; facsimile edition, Menston: Scolar Press, 1968), p. 251, cited by George Steevens in *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare . . .*, ed. James Boswell, vol. X (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1821; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1966), p. 309; and John Hester, *The First (and Second) Parte of the Keye of Philosophie* (London, 1596), p. 92, cited in Hoening, pp. 296-97.

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²⁴For biographies of John Arderne, see Ira Rutkow, *Surgery: An Illustrated History* (St. Louis: Mosby-Year Book, 1993), pp. 110-12, and the editor's introduction to John Arderne, *Treatises of Fistula in Ano; Hemorrhoids, and Clysters*, ed. D'Arcy Power (London: Oxford Univ. Press, Early English Text Society, 1910, reprinted 1968).

²⁵Errol Ardron, personal communication.

²⁶For the Ardens' and Shakespeare's genealogy, see George R. French, *Shakspeareana Genealogica*, Part II (London: Macmillan, 1869; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1975), 416-503; Charlotte C. Stopes, *Shakespeare's Family* (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), pp. 213-14; Hoening, p. 371.

²⁷Arderne's treatise is contained in Francisco Arceo, *A Most Excellent and Compendious Method of Curing Woundes in the Head, and in Other Partes of the Body, with Other Precepts of the Same Arte . . .*, trans. John Read (London: Thomas East for Thomas Cadman, 1588), pp. 81ff.

²⁸For a discussion of the story's permutations, see Howard C. Cole, *The All's Well Story from Boccaccio to Shakespeare* (Urbana, Illinois: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1981).

²⁹*Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca (Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1980), p. 430.

³⁰For the fistula in the *Decameron's* descendants, see Bernardo Accolti, *La Virginia* (Venice: Nicolo Zopino, 1519; reprinted, Bologna: Arnaldo Forni, 1983), sig. A4r; *Le Décaméron de Boccace*, trans. Antoine Le Maçon, vol. 3 (Paris: Isidore Lisieux, 1879), p. 7; William Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure*, ed. Joseph Jacobs, vol. 1 (London: David Nutt, 1890; reprinted, Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968), p. 171. For Shakespeare's knowledge of Boccaccio, see Herbert G. Wright, "How Did Shakespeare Come to Know the 'Decameron'?" *Modern Language Review*, 50 (1955), 45-48.

³¹For Charles V's fistula, see Doran, *Shakespeare and the Medical Society*, p. 11; and Enid McLeod, *The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pizan* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), p. 15. For Froissart in the original and in translation, see *Les Chroniques de Sire Jean Froissart*, ed. Jean A. C. Buchon, vol. 2 (Paris: A. Desrez, 1837), pp. 110-11; and *The Chronicle of Froissart*, trans. John Bouchier, vol. 3 (London: David Nutt, 1901; reprinted, New York: AMS, 1967), pp. 153-54.

³²More on Charles V's fistula: Auguste Brachet, "Charles V, dit le Sage, roi de France (1337-80)," in *Pathologie Mentale des Rois de France; Louis XI et ses Ascendants*

(Paris: Hachette, 1903), 527-84; and Charity C. Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984), p. 30.

³³For Christine's version of Charles V's life and death, see Christine de Pisan, *Le Livre des Fais et Bonnes Meurs du Sage Roy Charles V*, ed. Suzanne Solente, vols. 1-2 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1940). For her mention of fistula: Christine de Pizan, *La Vision-Christine; Introduction and Text*, ed. Mary L. Towner (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1932; rptd., New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 87. Cited in Jean-Louis Picherit, "Les Références Pathologiques et Thérapeutiques dans l'Oeuvre de Christine de Pizan," in *Une Femme de Lettres au Moyen Age; Études autour de Christine de Pizan* (Orléans: Paradigme, 1995), 233-44. For Helena as Christine, see Fraser, p. 5.

³⁴For English translations of the Percival story, see Chrétien de Troyes, *Perceval, or, The Story of the Grail*, trans. R. H. Cline (New York: Pergamon, 1983), p. 97; and Wolfram von Eschenbach, *Parzival*, trans. A. T. Hatto (New York: Penguin, 1980), p. 244. See Accolti, sig. A5r. For recent Fisher King glosses with non-genital wound placement, see Richard La Gravenese, *The Fisher King: The Book of the Film* (New York: Applause, 1991), p. 65; and Robert A. Johnson, *He: Understanding Masculine Psychology*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 2-3.

³⁵Caroline W. Bynum, "The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39 (1986), 399-439. Reprinted in Caroline W. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body* (New York: Zone, 1992), 79-117.

³⁶David Haley, *Shakespeare's Courtly Mirror: Reflexivity and Prudence in "All's Well That Ends Well"* (Newark, Delaware: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1993), p. 61.

³⁷For Bowdlerizations, see *Shakespeare's All's Well That Ends Well: With Alterations by J. P. Kemble, in A Collection of Dramatic Pieces*, vol. 2 (London, 1795), 113-72; and *The Family Shakespeare*, vol. 2., ed. Thomas Bowdler (London: Longmans, Green., 1872), p. 231.

³⁸For fistula-free children's versions, see Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare* (Chicago and New York: Rand, McNally, 1900), p. 280; Edith Nesbit, *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare* (New York: Weathervane, 1907), p. 273; and Marchette G. Chute, *Stories from Shakespeare* (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 99. In contrast is *Nicolas Bentley's Tales from Shakespeare* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 61-62.

³⁹*The Decameron Containing an Hundred Pleasant Novels*, trans. attributed to John Florio (London, 1620). Cited in Cole, p. 83.

⁴⁰J. L. Styan, *All's Well That Ends Well, Shakespeare in Performance* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 51-55.



Figure 1. John Arderne Probing an Anal Fistula,
From His *Treatises*.



Figure 2. Seal of the Association of Coloproctology of Great
Britain and Ireland, Designed by Surgeon A. J. Shorthouse.



Figure 3. Helena and the King of France, Traditional Depiction, from Chesney.



Figure 4. Helena and the King, Who Has an Anal Fistula, from Bentley.

From Agincourt to Bastogne: George S. Patton and the Rhetoric of Saint Crispin's Day by Mark Taylor

The purpose of this paper is to show that some of the rhetorical strategies General George Patton employed as he urged his troops to ready themselves for battle were strikingly like those Shakespeare's King Henry V used on a similar occasion. The resemblance is the more striking because of the vastly different idioms of the two men, the sometimes grand style of Henry, what Shakespeare perhaps learned at the King's New School in Stratford to call *megaloprepeia*, and the consistently very low or plain style of Patton, what *he* almost certainly did not think of as *extenuatum* or *genus humile*. The comparison will reveal something of the logic and structure of the military pep talk, the things one says to men, and the things one is careful not to say to them, when asking them to kill and also, perhaps, to die. My intention is to explore the archetype of a rhetorical mode, not to suggest that Patton set out deliberately to copy Shakespeare, or to update him, or that he regarded Shakespeare as a literary model to be followed; and even less would I suggest that in the character of Patton we should see the example of Henry, whether by chance or by Patton's conscious mimicry. Nevertheless, I shall begin by saying a few words about each of these matters.¹

First, we know that Patton was well read and that he liked both history, especially military history, and heroic tales; in the absence of specific evidence to the contrary we might reasonably conjecture that so perennially popular a play as Shakespeare's *Henry V*, with its epic adventures, heroic achievement, and martial rhetoric, would be an important story for him. However, evidence in support of this supposition is not lacking. His daughter Ruth Ellen reports his practicing "his war face in front of mirrors" in their house, while reciting another famous speech from the play (the whole of act three, scene one), the one beginning, "Once more unto the breach, dear friends" (III. i. 1-34), and ending, "Follow your spirit, and upon this charge / Cry 'God for Harry! England and Saint George!'" which includes the lines "Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide / Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit / To his full height! On, on you noblest English." Not knowing what they were quoting, Ruth Ellen recalls that she and her sister Little Bee "always shouted,

'On, On you noblest English,' to our horses going over jumps in horse shows—it was very inspiring."² It defies probability that Patton could have memorized this speech and been ignorant of the equally exuberant Saint Crispin's Day exhortation. Moreover, as Carlo D'Este notes in his recent biography, Patton possessed "an amazing capacity to memorize and quote verbatim," a talent that "compensated dramatically for his dyslexia," and on certain occasions he would even force his children to learn poems by heart.³

Second, one of the best known things about Patton is his belief in a theory of reincarnation so exact that he could claim the identities of specific military figures in the past and participation in particular earlier campaigns—that in incarnations great and small he had "died on the plains of Troy, battled in a phalanx against Cyrus the Persian, marched with Caesar's terrible Tenth Legion, fought with the Scottish Highlanders for the rights and hopes of the House of Stuart, [fallen] on Crécy's field in the Hundred Years' War, and [taken] part in all the great campaigns since then."⁴ Although for the English, at least, the next great campaign, after Crécy, concludes with the battle of Agincourt, neither the historical Henry Bolingbroke nor Shakespeare's creation has been advanced as one of Patton's avatars, so far as I can determine. Nevertheless, a psychobiographer ready to entertain the possibility of the transmigration of the soul of a literary character into a man of flesh and blood might do well to ponder resemblances among darker aspects of the two figures. Patton's striking two hospitalized soldiers, in Sicily, in August 1943, incidents notorious at the time and virtually mythologized since, seems prompted by an uncontrollable, infantile rage perhaps not so very different from what Henry reveals in his fury over the French Dauphin's gift of tennis balls. "I can't help it, but it makes my blood boil to think of a yellow bastard being babied I won't have those cowardly bastards hanging around our hospitals. We'll probably have to shoot them some time anyway, or we'll raise a breed of morons," Patton said.⁵ With more wit and rhetorical balance but no less fury Henry said, "[F]or many a thousand widows / Shall this his mock mock out of their dear husbands, / Mock mothers from their sons, mock castles down" (*Henry V*, I. ii. 285-87). If, as Carlo D'Este tentatively suggests, Patton's irrationality might have been a consequence of "brain damage" resulting from "too many head injuries from a lifetime of falls from horses, and from road accidents,"⁶ then Henry's own might be a lingering result of the treatment of his youthful self by the Chief Justice, who did "Rate, rebuke, and roughly send to

prison / Th' immediate heir of England" (2 *Henry IV*, V. ii. 70-71). The consequences of Henry's anger could be far greater than his response to the Dauphin's tennis balls, however, and unimaginably greater than anything Patton's rages led to. "I was not angry since I came to France" (IV. vii. 54), Henry says, until this moment—the moment he has given orders for the English soldiers to kill their French prisoners (historically, as many as three thousand men).⁷ Censure of this command is oblique and veiled in Shakespeare, but in his main source for the play, Raphael Holinshed writes of "this dolorous decree, and pitifull proclamation" leading to "this lamentable slaughter" and tells us "how some Frenchmen were suddenlie sticked with daggers, some were brained with pollaxes, some slaine with malls, other had their throats cut, and some their bellies pached [stabbed], so that in effect, having respect to the great number, few prisoners were saved."⁸

In the English camp the night before the great battle that would become known at its conclusion as Agincourt ("Then call we this the field of Agincourt, / Fought on the day of Crispin Crispian," Henry says when the battle is done [IV. vii. 89-90]), the Earl of Westmorland notes the small size of Henry's army and wishes "that we now had here / But one ten thousand of those men in England / That do no work today!" (IV. iii. 16-18). "What's he that wishes so?" Henry rebukes him. "If we are marked to die, we are enough / To do our country loss," and on the other hand, he implies, if we should live, more glory will come to each of us in proportion to our small numbers. "God's peace, I would not lose so great an honor / As one more man" in our ranks would take from me. Honor is what I want (to paraphrase Henry), and the fewer there are of us, the more we will earn.⁹ Moreover, if there is among us any one "which hath no stomach to this fight," he is more than welcome to leave with passport and crowns that will be provided for his return to England. "We would not die in that man's company / That fears his fellowship to die with us." (Compare Patton, who makes no pretense to such allowances: "Those who are not willing to fight will be tried by court-martial for cowardice in the face of the enemy.")¹⁰ These remarks provide the *exordium* to the proof that follows, Henry's extraordinarily inspiring homily:

This day is called the feast of Crispian.
 He that outlives this day and comes safe home
 Will stand a-tiptoe when this day is named
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall see this day and live old age
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
 And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."

Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
 And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's Day."
 Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot
 But he'll remember, with advantages,
 What feats he did that day. Then shall our names,
 Familiar in his mouth as household words,
 Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
 Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
 Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.
 This story shall the good man teach his son,
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by
 From this day to the ending of the world
 But we in it shall be remembered,
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.
 For he today that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition.
 And gentlemen in England now abed
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day.

(*Henry V*, IV. iii. 40-67)

How well these words (one of "the beauties of Shakespeare," they were once called) set the tone of "an episode to quicken the interest of any schoolboy ever bored by a history lesson. . . ." ¹¹

General Patton's speeches to his troops, especially those given to division-size audiences during the weeks before the D-Day invasion, were celebrated at the time, nervously yet eagerly anticipated by their auditors. "When his arrival was imminent," Carlo D'Este writes, in a chapter titled "The Speech," "it would suddenly become quiet" on the parade ground or field where the troops were assembled, "and then Patton would arrive, behind an MP escort, and emerge from [his] Mercedes. In his buff-and-dark-green uniform, helmet, and highly shined cavalry boots he would march through their ranks to the front of the platform and inspect the honor guard closely with his eyes, before mounting the platform with his escort." ¹² After a chaplain's invocation and a command to the men to be seated, Patton would begin. His speeches were various, but one of them appears to have been used, in modified forms, on several occasions. I select, as manageably brief and as especially interesting in its correspondences to Henry's Saint Crispin's Day speech, the version, probably but a fragment of a whole speech, displayed by Ladislas Farago as epigraph to *The Last Days of Patton*. Patton was addressing the men of General Leonard T. Gerow's Sixth Armored Division in England on 31 May 1944:

There is one great thing you men will be able to say after this war is all over and you are at home once again. And you may thank God for it. You may be thankful that twenty years from now when you are sitting by the fireplace with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the great World War II, you won't have to cough, shift him to the other knee and say, "Well, your Granddaddy shoveled shit in Louisiana." No sir! You can look him straight in the eye and say, "Son, your Granddaddy rode with the great Third Army and a son-of-a-bitch named Georgie Patton."¹³

Correspondences between these speeches are remarkably specific and extensive, although it may be said that certain topoi are perhaps inevitable in effusions of inspirational purpose.

There is, first of all, the claim of divine sanction for their action. Henry, who is generally very good at enlisting God in his cause, is content here with saying, in his exordium, "God's will, I pray thee, wish not one man more." We would hardly expect to hear General Patton in 1944 invoking the will of God to his soldiers, devout Christian though he may have been, but in telling them that "you may thank God for" the opportunity that is at hand, he does acknowledge the will of God and suggests that the presence of his men in the Third Army is a matter of more than chance. Related to this, second, is the insistence of both leaders that their men are especially privileged to be participants in the battles that are to ensue, that they are lucky to have been chosen for the great endeavor. "If we are marked to die," Henry says, "we are enough / To do our country loss; and if to live, / The fewer men, the greater share of honor." "O, do not wish one more," he tells Westmorland. Similarly, Patton tries to make his men feel chosen in the group he repeatedly defines as "you" (in contradistinction to Henry's "we"): "you men," "you are at home once again," "you may thank God," "You may be thankful," "when you are sitting by the fireplace," "you won't have to cough," "You can look him straight in the eye." However different their selection of pronouns, both Henry and Patton know that "the cultivation of a sense of kinship" between their soldiers and themselves is essential to the success of command.¹⁴

Speeches include not only what is said but what is not said, as well, and Henry and Patton choose *not* to discuss some of the same things. They do not, for instance, mention the enemy; the French are not present in Henry's words nor the Germans in Patton's. It is almost as if their armies will achieve great things in a vacuum. This omission may be significant, for to mention the enemy would be the first step toward embodying him, then

arming him, then having him fight and kill some of one's own army; not to mention him, contrariwise, is to neutralize his killing power. Since Henry's and Patton's failures to cite the enemy may therefore seem so reasonable as to seem inevitable at such moments, it should be said that these omissions contravene much ancient practice, that, for example, of another great speaker, Alexander the Great, whose pre-battle oratory could encourage his soldiers by dripping disdain ("the feeblest and softest hordes of Asia") on a named enemy.¹⁵

Interestingly, very little attention is paid to the possibility of failure, the inevitability of casualties, the chance of one's own death or maiming. Henry, it is true, says, "He that outlives this day and comes safe home" and "He that shall see this day and live old age," implying that some will not outlive this day, come safe home, and live (until) old age. But he also says, "For he today that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother," as if one can shed his blood today and then be all right, or as if a brotherhood of the dead would mean something. For his part, Patton says, "There is one great thing you men will be able to say after this war is all over and you are at home once again": "you are at home," implies *all* of you, not (as we know will have to be the case) some of you. Elsewhere Patton confronts the problem directly and says to his troops: "You are not going to die. Only two percent of you, right here today, would be killed in a major battle."¹⁶

As they address their soldiers, Henry and Patton are both concerned with events that have not yet occurred. Nevertheless these events are to be anticipated less as actions-about-to-happen than as actions-in-the-past to be recollected and recounted. Their point is not "You are about to do a great thing," whose significance will lie in the doing, but rather "You are soon to have done a great thing," whose significance will lie in the remembrances of it. "He that outlives this day and comes safe home," "He that shall see this day and live old age," will celebrate Saint Crispin's Day forever and be grateful he was there; and Patton tells his men, whom, indeed, he seems to be rushing into early retirement, "You may be thankful that twenty years from now when you are sitting by the fireplace with your grandson on your knee," you will have a story to tell him.

The story, of course, is the thing for both, *the story*, the narrative the men will tell others, not simply remember privately. And most important among the others are the children, "This story shall the goodman teach his son," and another story shall the young grandfather teach his grandson. The men can prove they were there and have earned the right to narrate their tales:

Henry's soldier, who "will . . . strip his sleeve and show his scars, / And say, 'These wounds I had on Crispin's Day,'" and Patton's, who will not have to cough and shift knees but will be able to "look [his grandson] straight in the eye." Passing their stories on to the next generation and the one after that, Henry's soldier and Patton's will remember the camaraderie of their wars and assume a retrospective intimacy with their superiors, whose names will be "Familiar in his mouth as household words, / Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter, / Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester" and "a son-of-a-bitch named Georgie Patton." Georgie, the diminutive of Patton's first name, was used all his life by family, friends, and his peers in the American officer corps, but one shudders at imagining a private soldier presuming such familiarity. "Hey, Georgie, got a smoke?" His reception would have been as severe, surely, as that of Falstaff calling the new Henry V by the no longer permissible sobriquet "Hal," not even "my royal Hal." "My Lord Chief Justice," Henry says, "speak to that vain man." (See 2 *Henry IV*, V. v. 41-44.)

Although King Henry and General Patton are both addressing large numbers of soldiers—several noblemen plus "Erpingham with all his host" (stage direction at beginning of IV. iii), on the one hand, and the officers and men of the Sixth Armored Division, on the other—there is a significant difference between the sense of audience the two leaders display. Patton makes no distinction at all among general officers, field grade officers, company grade officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men. He calls his auditors "you men" in the first sentence of his speech and does not otherwise identify them thereafter; one infers either that they are *all* equally his men, irrespective of rank, or that he intends his words for the men alone, the enlisted men, that is, and is ignoring his officers. Henry, by contrast, mentions in his speech the names of several of his officers, as we would now call them, and in doing so does something very interesting and revelatory, which to my knowledge has not been pointed out. The stimulus to his speech, we recall, is Westmorland's expressed desire for more fighting men: "O that we now had here / But one ten thousand of those men in England / That do no work today!" Consequently, Henry's speech begins as a specific reply to Westmorland, "What's he that wishes so? / My cousin Westmorland? No, my fair cousin. . . ."17 Henry will then address him twice more in what I am calling the exordium, as "my coz" (30) and as "Westmorland" (34). Then, in the twenty-eight lines beginning "This day is called the feast of Crispian" (40), Henry appears both to embrace his auditors with his "we's" as already

noted, ("We few, we happy few, we band of brothers"), to include them in his royal self, and also to objectify them in the third person while individualizing them as a singular number ("He that outlives this day and comes safe home"). There are no "you's" in his speech, and it appears that Westmorland has been forgotten or has become one part of the "band of brothers." However, this is not so. Pondering the old soldier's future reminiscences, Henry says,

. . . Then shall our names,
Familiar in his mouth as household words,
Harry the King, Bedford and Exeter,
Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered.

The omission of "Westmorland" from the list of familiar names is pointed and deliberate: Henry appears to be punishing Westmorland, by denying him space in the later myth, for his initial timidity or for voicing it in front of the others. (Henry does *not* say that cowards will not be remembered, but Patton probably would have.) Westmorland as a matter of fact, was not present at the historical battle of Agincourt (List of Roles, 11n.) and neither were Warwick and Talbot (IV. iii. 54n.); but unlike Westmorland and Warwick, John Talbot, first Earl of Shrewsbury, the hero of Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI*, is not even a character in this play. As Shakespeare thinks back on his earlier historical tetralogy, Henry has his old soldier remember the future. If Westmorland were not being punished, or if the King were more magnanimous, Henry could have said, "Warwick, Westmorland, Salisbury and Gloucester," not affecting the line's meter. Warwick is not present in act four, scene three, and Salisbury, who exits at line 14 and returns following line 67, does not hear the Saint Crispin's Day speech; only Bedford and Exeter, of those named in lines 53-54, are present to hear themselves exalted. Erpingham is there but, as a mere knight, probably would not expect to be included. What the play's reader should recognize is Henry's extraordinary ability to settle a private score in the midst of a great public exhortation. Further evidence that Westmorland's proclaimed desire for "one ten thousand of those men in England / That do no work today" continues to smart is Henry's contemptuous reference at the end of his speech to "gentlemen in England now abed."

One very clever strategy Patton employs, in having the boy ask his grandfather "what [he] did in the great World War II," is to incorporate into his homily an allusion to the once-famous British World War I recruiting poster in which a little girl, sitting

on her father's lap, asks him, "Daddy, what did You do in the Great War?" As her even younger brother plays on the floor with toy soldiers and a toy cannon and prepares to do the right thing when his chance comes, the father's blank expression tells us he has no good answer, and it is now too late to build one.¹⁸ This poster, like the two speeches I am examining, seeks to leap from a present, in which men are being recruited for war, over a near future of bloodletting into a distant future of remembrance and hard questions. Making his little speech coextensive with the poster, Patton is insisting on the inevitability of accountability, thus giving the scene a mythic dimension, because it is to be eternally replayed. Henry's "Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot / But he'll remember with advantages / What feats he did that day." In seeking the elevation of the current campaign, through its association with an earlier image, into myth, Patton is once again anticipated by Henry, who handles the matter rather differently. Although both leaders speak of their stories being told, Henry is more concerned than Patton with the dynamics of telling and re-telling. He speaks first of how the story of Saint Crispin's Day will change its shape and details in the imaginations of the survivors: "Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot, / But he'll remember with advantages / What feats he did that day." In the way of primary epics in pre-literate societies (and perhaps we should remind ourselves how many in Henry's army must have been illiterate), the battle of Agincourt will grow and change with each recounting, will become independent of the facts of the day and the memories of the veterans: "[A]ll shall be forgot," Henry says, but the story will go on, "with advantages," bigger than ever. And then the story will be passed down through the society, as the goodman tells it to his son, and that son, we infer, to his son, and *that* son, we again infer, to his son, and so the story will continue, ever growing, "From this day to the ending of the world"—when, with all the advantages, its relationship to Saint Crispin's Day, 25 October, 1415, will be as tenuous as that of the *Iliad* to the historical but irretrievable events in Troy, c. 1184 BC, the traditional date in antiquity for that city's fall. (It is interesting that although Shakespeare's play *Henry V* could offer in written and therefore final, or frozen, form the last word on these events, it does not: as is often remarked, there are no scenes of battle in the play.)¹⁹

Whether places in historical memory are easily won by rhetorical assertion and the sentimentality of aging veterans is another matter. "It may be observed," Dr. Johnson wrote, apropos of the Saint Crispin's Day speech, "that we are apt to promise

ourselves a more lasting memory than the changing state of human things admits. This prediction [that we in this day shall be remembered] is not verified; the feast of Crispin passes by without any mention of Agincourt. Late events obliterate the former: the civil wars have left in this nation scarcely any tradition of more ancient history."²⁰ But still later events can revive the first ones. On 27 November, 1944 (the English civil wars long forgotten), one month after that year's Saint Crispin's Day and half a year after Patton's speech to the Sixth Armored Division, Laurence Olivier's film of *Henry V* was released in London, a deliberate initiative in the war effort, an event symbolically marking Shakespeare's play as part of the World War II *Zeitgeist*.²¹

Finally, the words of King Henry and General Patton, which enlarge the events that are about to ensue, enlarge also their auditors, the men who are about to fight (and perhaps die) for them. By telling their men they are courageous, the leaders make them courageous. This is inspiration, an injecting of the martial spirit into soldiers, surely the main goal of the two speeches. Henry says, "And gentlemen in England now abed / Shall hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks / That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day," and Patton says, "You can look him straight in the eye and say, 'Son, your Granddaddy rode with the great Third Army and a son-of-a-bitch named Georgie Patton.'" Rousing indeed are such words, for Henry's small army and Patton's great one—and for ourselves watching Kenneth Branagh²² and George C. Scott²³ strut across the screen. So it will be salutary, perhaps, to close with a reminder that rhetoric is not war. How easy it is, as William Hazlitt observed of *Henry V*, to "take a very romantic, heroic, patriotic, and poetical delight" as great exploits unfold before us, in a place "where no blood follows the smoke that wounds our ears, where no harvest bends beneath horses' hoofs, no city flames, no little child is butchered, no dead men's bodies are found piled on heaps and festering the next morning—in the orchestra."²⁴

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Notes

¹A somewhat different version of this paper was presented at the eleventh conference on World War II at Siena College, Loudonville, New York, 30-31 May 1996. I would like to thank Doug Sun, California State University, Los Angeles, for his helpful comments.

²Carlo D'Este, *Patton: A Genius for War* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), p. 817. "[N]oblest English" is the reading of the second Folio of 1632; the first Folio of 1623 has "Noblish," and the quarto of 1600 has "noble." In this essay I quote *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik, in the Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995). Shakespeare's other plays are quoted from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

³D'Este, pp. 48, 323.

⁴Suzy Smith, *Reincarnation* (Los Angeles, 1967), p. 75. Quoted in D'Este, p. 322.

⁵D'Este, p. 534. I am grateful to Nicholas Taylor for suggesting to me these parallels in the behavior of the two men.

⁶D'Este, p. 756.

⁷See Desmond Seward, *Henry V: The Scourge of God* (New York: Viking, 1987), p. 80. John Keegan, in *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking, 1976), sees the number as far less. "Henry's order" that the prisoners be killed, Keegan writes, "rather than bring about the prisoners' massacre, was intended by its threat to terrorize them into abject inactivity." In consequence, "we need not reckon their number in thousands, perhaps not even in hundreds" (p. 111). Keegan's explanation of Henry's purpose strikes me as overly speculative. Using contemporary chronicles Keegan shows that Henry "detailed an esquire and two hundred archers to set about the execution" (85-86), however fully it was carried out. That Henry's willing executioners were archers is important since they "stood outside the chivalric system," unlike men-at-arms. "The bowmen of Henry's army were not only tough professional soldiers. There is also evidence that many had enlisted in the first place to avoid punishment for civil acts of violence, including murder" (p. 110). For a recent popular, highly censorious account of the execution of Henry's prisoners in the context of war crimes and the laws of war, see Lawrence Weschler, "Take No Prisoners," *The New Yorker*, 72, 16 (June 17, 1996), pp. 50-59.

⁸Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (1587). Quoted in Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 4 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), p. 397.

⁹Cf. *1 Henry IV*, IV. i. 77-79, where Hotspur, learning of Northumberland's absence from Shrewsbury, says, "I rather of his absence make this use: / It lends a larger luster and more great opinion, / A larger dare to our great enterprise. . . ." This attitude is an implicit criticism of Hotspur's rashness. Henry's similar words perhaps reveal the seeming desperateness of his position and therefore magnify his courage.

¹⁰D'Este, p. 533.

¹¹John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, p. 79. The context, however, rather changes the implications of what I quote: Agincourt "is a school outing to the Old Vic, Shakespeare is fun, *son-et-lumière*, blank verse, Laurence Olivier in armour battle [sic]; it is an episode to quicken the interest of any schoolboy ever bored by a history lesson, a set-piece demonstration of English moral superiority and a cherished ingredient of a fading national myth. It is also a story of slaughter-yard behaviour and of outright atrocity."

¹²D'Este, pp. 600-01.

¹³Ladislav Farago, *The Last Days of Patton* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1981). For a variation of this speech see Martin Blumenson, ed., *The Patton Papers 1940-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), pp. 456-58. "Since he spoke extemporaneously" to his troops, Blumenson writes of Patton, "there were several versions" of the speech" (p. 456). Blumenson quotes a speech of seven paragraphs, ending with

this paragraph: "There's one great thing you men can say when it's all over and you're home once more. You can thank God that twenty years from now, when you're sitting around the fireside with your grandson on your knee and he asks you what you did in the war, you won't have to shift him to the other knee, cough, and say, 'I shoveled shit in Louisiana'" (p. 458). There the speech ends.

¹⁴John Keegan, *The Mask of Command* (New York: Penguin, 1988), p. 351.

¹⁵*The Mask of Command*, p. 56.

¹⁶See Blumenson, *The Patton Papers 1940-1945*, p. 457.

¹⁷In his edition, used throughout this paper, T. W. Craik punctuates the two sentences as above: "What's he that wishes so? / My cousin Westmorland?" The second question mark makes Henry's tone one of surprise: surely my cousin Westmorland doesn't wish for more men! surely not you! The Folio of 1623 has a full stop after "My Cousin Westmorland." The three quarto editions of the play replace "Westmorland" with Warwick in this scene, though Warwick's name is not present in the opening stage direction. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor seem alone among modern editors in allowing Warwick to replace Westmorland in IV. iii., hence: "What's he that wishes so? / My cousin Warwick?" and "Rather proclaim it presently through my host." (William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, compact ed., Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, general eds. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988].) If this reading is correct, then Henry's principal interlocutor will be among those later "in their flowing cups freshly remembered"; but I see no reason to accept it. As T. W. Craik writes, "The Folio text is so evidently the better that it must be the basis of a modern edition" (p. 29).

¹⁸In *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness in Modern War* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 1997) Samuel Hynes also notes that "General Patton . . . drew on the familiar British recruiting poster to encourage his troops as they prepared for the Normandy invasion" (p. 114). Hynes quotes the same version of the speech as Blumenson (see note 14, above), omitting the final sentence—what the soldier will say to his grandson. The film *Patton* (Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. With George C. Scott and Karl Malden. Twentieth Century-Fox, 1970) begins with General Patton addressing to unseen troops a monologue that is a composite of many real speeches. Toward the end of it, General Patton (Scott) says, "There's one thing you men will be able to say when you get back home"—and then, curiously, though he says what they will *not* have to say ("shoveled shit in Louisiana"), he never does say what they *will* say ("rode with the great Third Army. . .").

¹⁹It is worth pointing out, I believe that in the speech we invariably remember and refer to as Henry's "Saint Crispin's Day" speech—as in "Do you know the "Saint Crispin's Day" speech by heart?"—that whole phrase occurs only one time, in the speech's very last words. Henry almost uses all those words several times, but doesn't quite say them, as if only at the end will he be willing to share with us the title of the battle and of his magnificent oration; he says: "the feast of Crispian," "the name of Crispian," "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian," "wounds I had on Crispin's Day," "Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by," and finally, ten lines later, "That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day."

²⁰Samuel Johnson, *Selections from Johnson on Shakespeare*, ed. Bertrand H. Bronson (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 200-01.

²¹*Henry V*. Dir. Laurence Olivier. With Laurence Olivier, Robert Newton, and Leslie Banks. United Artists, 1944.

²²*Henry V*. Dir. Kenneth Branagh. With Kenneth Branagh, Paul Scofield, Derek Jacobi, and Ian Holm. Sam Goldwyn Co. and Renaissance Films in association with the BBC, 1989.

²³On the film *Patton*, see note 18, above.

²⁴William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1818; London: Dent [Everyman's Library], 1936), p. 286.

Playing on the Rim of the Frame: Kenneth Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* by Kathy M. Howlett

Written, directed, and produced by Kenneth Branagh, *A Midwinter's Tale* (1995) highlights an actor's engagement with Shakespeare's dramatic art, in which "working on Shakespeare," asserts Branagh, "is the search for meaning."¹ Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* reveals the variety of expression available to Shakespeare's drama when the viewer is permitted to concentrate on the critical intervals and asides, and on the mistakes that occur in the midst of the textual enactment. The film does not so much introduce restrictions as to what can be meaningful as it guides its audience in viewing variability without investment in *Hamlet's* fixity of meaning, production, or moral order. As Branagh confirms, "In rehearsal, what works works. I think you ought to try everything."² Because the viewer discerns Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through multiple layers of framed activities identified as "play" or rehearsal, one learns not to invest meaning in the actors' proficiency of lines and interpretation of character, or in the stage business of blocking, timing, or costuming. Instead, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is only a starting point for the film's prolonged rehearsal, and its attendant cultural, theatrical, and psychological investigations. Even the opening night performance that is the climax of the film is a rehearsal of sorts, for in those final, confused moments the audience continues to entertain unexplored textual possibilities. What if Ophelia were to strike Hamlet in anger? What if Hamlet could be played by both a male and a female? Branagh's film demonstrates that Shakespeare's text is radically incomplete in itself.

A Midwinter's Tale reveals an actor's struggle with the problem of mimetic art in *Hamlet*, as told through the story of a depressed and struggling actor, Joe Harper (Michael Maloney). Having been rejected for the role of a spaceman in a Hollywood feature, Harper decides to take his small savings and mount a production of *Hamlet* for the Christmas season. As his agent warns him, only misfits and "nutters" audition at this time of year, and, indeed, Harper assembles a comic ensemble of aspiring Shakespearean actors who journey with him back to the small English village of Hope for the Christmas season (Figure 1). If Branagh seems to be offering a morality tale for actors, in which Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the apparatus through which the actors

discover meaning, the film also confirms that Shakespeare's play is not the monolith that structures meaning. By manifesting Shakespeare's text at various levels—its rehearsal, the actors who perform it, its cultural world of theatrical and cinematic history, and the pressures of market considerations (as articulated by Joe's agent and the Hollywood producer who sees their production)—*A Midwinter's Tale* makes the claim that no one level encompasses the others. Instead, the viewer witnesses multiple images imbedded in other images, in an infinite regress of self-enclosed representation that deconstructs the competing representations at work within textual, theatrical, and cinematic forms.

In openly parodying the conventions of theatre and cinema from which the film's production of *Hamlet* is derived, *A Midwinter's Tale* highlights the instability and transience of the Shakespearean text. As Harper and his troupe struggle with the problem of mimetic art in *Hamlet*, they soon discover that there is no antecedent reality on which the artistic text is modeled.³ The quest for meaning, for what "works" in production, as the film reveals, is merely a critique of representation dependent upon arbitrary signs that cannot be systematized into any sort of hierarchy. Like the actor in Branagh's film who randomly makes words fit in the spaces of a crossword puzzle without adherence to the meaning assigned by the clues, *A Midwinter's Tale* explores the possibilities that "fit" dramatic action without adherence to meaning assigned by the textual clues. The audience witnesses multiple strategies of performance that deny the actors or viewer any inevitable strategies of containment, so that any word, scene, or character may experience multiple meanings without signaling any boundary. As a consequence, the film's spectator becomes the sole organizer of the patterns he perceives as he accepts the changes in *Hamlet*'s organizational premises and compensates for differences. Yet it is possible, as the film demonstrates, that these changes may still be meaningful, even as multiple perspectives and performative possibilities are played out in competing versions of theatrical *Hamlets*. In fact, Branagh's film implies that postmodernism may be a way of getting at Shakespeare.

Branagh's method is to release latent meanings in the Shakespearean text through rehearsal, a process of discovery that sometimes takes the form of irreverent carnivalizing. By calling attention to theatrical artifice and operations, *A Midwinter's Tale* burlesques traditional and formulaic aspects of *Hamlet*'s theatrical and cinematic history, from Shakespeare to Henry Irving to Laurence Olivier, and exposes layers of critical imagination, extending from Hollywood to Shakespeare's stage to the very

actors who comically struggle with their roles. The film, as a consequence, embodies both the positive and negative postmodernisms of recent cultural theory, by imagining the relativity of Shakespeare's drama within our culture while pointing out its place within the development of late capitalism and its proliferation in the production of cultural "signs." For though the film demystifies those aspects of the play's production that render collectivity precarious, it also envisions, within the degraded process of the present, the hope of a future "golden age" where the actor can finally be free from depression, oppression, and alienation.

I. The Frame's the Thing

What is not framed within the play *Hamlet* is implicitly larger than the play's frame in that it contains the processes and assumptions of the art contained. Leo Braudy observes that "to place an art within another art therefore creates an aesthetic perspective," in that it leads the viewer to an "inner space" or "history" that supplies "a depth in time to what might otherwise be only an individual work."⁴ Branagh's film is a critique of representation that fills in *Hamlet's* blank spaces and reveals how the strange can in fact be familiar, how the remoteness of a four-hundred-year-old play about a "depressed aristocrat," as Joe Harper's sister complains, can, in fact, reflect parts of the self in a late-twentieth-century postmodern world.⁵ As Braudy observes, "frames, like criticism, domesticate what they help us to discover. They protect us from disruption even while they teach us to cope with it."⁶

The frame of *A Midwinter's Tale* includes not only what is contained within Shakespeare's *Hamlet* but elements external to the play's borders. The actors' rehearsal of *Hamlet* constitutes the rim of the frame through which the audience expects to perceive the innermost activity, Shakespeare's drama, although the film frame never presents the play in its entirety nor do its fragments have a stable form. Instead, the rim establishes the status of the theatrical frame in "reality," within which are further layerings, or untransformed events and their keyings.⁷ *Hamlet* itself illustrates the possibilities of multiple layerings within the dramatic frame, in that the play highlights differentiated levels of transformational framing, of which *The Murder of Gonzago* constitutes the play's innermost point. Similarly, in Branagh's film the play *Hamlet* is the innermost point that exposes the histories and motivations of the individual actors

and provides the perspective from which Branagh burlesques twentieth century film and culture. Yet the film challenges Braudy's claim that frames function to protect the viewer from disruption, for in viewing *A Midwinter's Tale* the audience experiences the ease with which the boundaries between frames are penetrated. Rather than taming what the viewer sees, the layers of framed activities have a revolutionary effect in that their confusing multiplicity and interpenetrability liberate the viewer from static conceptions of the play. In fact, what appears to be merely on the rim of the frame becomes in Branagh's film a competing representation of what lies inside.

A Midwinter's Tale, like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, challenges the differences between a play's inner and outer frames of reference, or the interface of art and life, by highlighting Joe Harper's representation of himself as an actor and the role he plays in *Hamlet*. As Joe Harper's story illustrates, "art" and "life" are simply competing representations. Harper, the depressed, unemployed actor who directs, produces, and plays the lead in *Hamlet*, demonstrates the unsettling indeterminacy of the boundaries between the fictitious roles he plays and the "real" ones that define his life. The two spaces of representation—the actor and his role—reveal the dual capacity of dramatic art to recognize simultaneously the material realities of "this unworthy scaffold" (what Weimann calls the "nonfictional site of institutionalized entertainment") and "an imagined locus of verisimilitude" of an enacted role which privileges "the authority of what and who was represented."⁸ Like the play it enacts, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Branagh's film suspends the links between actor and role, closing the gap between dramatic illusion and verisimilitude. But whereas in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* narrows the frame by which he explores family guilt and murder through the encased events of the play within the play, Branagh opens the spectator's perspective to include the outer rim of the frame that is the actors' world. This outer circle of reference enables the characters within the film to exist both inside and outside the play, not unlike the way in which Bottom, also an aspiring actor and lover, explores the concentric layers of fictionality in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As in the Shakespearean comedy from which Branagh draws at least a portion of the title of his film, *A Midwinter's Tale* suggests that the relationship between levels of fictionality depends upon how the audience experiences the performance at its center, depending upon whether it perceives a "shift from spectacle to game—from encasing events to encased events."⁹ For example, Branagh plays with the bracketing of events when the character

who plays Ophelia introduces out-of-frame behavior. During the opening night performance of *Hamlet*, when the entire cast believes that Joe Harper has been lured away from the production to be cast in a Hollywood science-fiction film, Harper suddenly reappears to assume his role as Hamlet. However, the woman who plays Ophelia falls back upon a self that is separate from the one relevantly projected in her Shakespearean role when she strikes Joe (as Hamlet) and hands the love letters back to him. Of course, the staged audience who watches their interaction is ignorant of any personal relationship outside the roles they play and takes the performance to be entirely fictional.

In structuring a play within a film, Branagh also distinguishes between levels of fictionality inherent in the two acting media. The cinematic spectacle that constitutes the film's outer layer, which includes the story of the actors' lives and conflicts that animates the textual center, denies the viewer any direct access to its own mechanisms or to the film's frame. The viewer never witnesses Branagh directing the film, and never is informed that the actor who plays Joe Harper is anything other than that character, although at various moments Branagh introduces anti-illusionist techniques that recall the devices of early silent films (as, for example, when Joe Harper's narrative is abruptly ended by the darkened screen that introduces the "Prologue"). However, these disruptions produce barely perceptible ruptures in the boundaries between viewer and performance when compared to the theatrical spectacle at the film's center, which continually alerts the audience to the circumstances of its own artifice and production. The performance of *Hamlet* that exists at the center of *A Midwinter's Tale* insists upon exposing its own theatricality, of displaying its display, revealing what Barbara Freedman describes as "frames framed by their contexts."¹⁰ Conflicting representations are thereby mutually sustained in that the film demands participation and identification while the theatrical center permits comic distancing and exposure. The spectator can be profoundly moved by Joe Harper's timely return for opening night, at great professional cost to himself, and at the same time laugh at the play when the flustered male actor who plays Gertrude bids Hamlet to "cast off thy coloured nightie."¹¹

In this way Branagh's film adapts the poststructuralist concept of linguistic discontinuity between signs and meaning, as played out in the space of the film and the stage it represents, a space that highlights the multiple cultural functions of performance. As Robert Weimann observes, gaps between the playtext

and its theatrical performance were a necessary condition of the Elizabethan stage, but "these gaps could more effectively be closed and these links more consequentially broken than in any other theatre culture before or since," because "social occasion and the uses of significations came together."¹² Branagh's film alerts its audience to the function of signs even as it parodies their lost relevance and function in contemporary culture with laughable directness. As the small car loaded with the actors drives past a signpost designating that they have entered the hamlet of "Hope," one actor chirps, "I think it's a sign." "Yes, love," responds another actor, "it's a road sign." "I think it's symbolical," murmurs another.¹³ Yet, as this moment also (symbolically) reveals, the space of the theatre holds the hope of a fluid traffic between the "signs" of dramatic representation and the social world the actor inhabits, in that the act of signification itself is "in-formed by the circumstances of the performance" and thereby invested with meaning.¹⁴ Like Shakespeare's own theatre, Branagh's film draws the viewer's attention to the interpenetration of "signs," in which the audience is continually aware of the relationship between the actor who represents a particular role and that actor's identity as understood in the context of the film's narrative. Moreover, it extends that vision outward towards a larger circle of cultural, commercial, theatrical, and historical references the audience shares with the performer who plays the actor who plays a part in *Hamlet*.

By self-consciously comparing the theatre in Shakespeare's time to the cinema of the modern age, the film seems to reflect upon the historical moment of its own possibility. Filled with references to other films and performances, *A Midwinter's Tale* is as self-reflexive as *Hamlet*. Barbara Everett observes, "There is an old joke about *Hamlet* being full of quotations. So it is; but perhaps so it always was, even for its first audiences."¹⁵ Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* is also intertextual in its agonistic relationship between theatre and film, in its reliance on correspondences of similarity and difference between Olivier's *Hamlet* and this film, and in its critique of the commercialization of cultural and artistic legitimacy.

We see in Joe Harper, not unlike Hamlet himself, a troubled awareness of the simultaneous resemblance and discrepancy between the play and its older models. Joe, like Hamlet, selects an old play because he feels it mirrors his inner state ("I'm depressed"), but, like Hamlet's *Murder of Gonzago*, the staginess and stylistic archaisms of the drama separate it from Hollywood and its values and the modern existence that frame and mock it.

As much as Shakespeare's drama often contextualizes a character within the trappings of an archaic theatricality to demonstrate the character's identification with that past, Branagh dramatizes Joe Harper's struggle to make meaning from *Hamlet* within a theatrical space reminiscent of Olivier's *Hamlet*.¹⁶ In using black-and-white cinematography and deep focus camera shots, and in emphasizing the cavernous space of the church as Joe grows more and more despairing of ever producing *Hamlet*, Branagh visualizes Joe's (and the film's) own obsession with Olivier. However, the older models that Joe and Hamlet choose fail them because they discover a gap between role and character. Examples abound in *A Midwinter's Tale* where Joe's repeated attempts to replicate Olivier's successes only lead to disappointment. When Joe sits in profile in the darkened space of his makeshift office (strategically situated in front of the church altar) and intones Hamlet's lines, "O God, [O] God, / How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable / Seem to me all the uses of this world!" (I. ii. 132-34), the moment parodies Hamlet's lines (in that Joe sits over a page of accounts and contemplates his pressing financial woes) as well as Olivier's cinematic treatment of the play (in the heightened lighting upon Joe's profile, his theatrical pose, and the camera's penetrating focus). At this moment Joe's sister's face suddenly intrudes into the darkened space of the cinematic screen opposite Joe and sarcastically remarks, "That's not bad, Sir Laurence," undercutting the heightened drama of the brother's portrayal.¹⁷ Of course, as Joe repeatedly complains, his professional and personal life fail utterly to conform to that of Sir Laurence Olivier: "If everything had gone according to Laurence Olivier's book I would have known triumph, disappointment and married a beautiful woman. Instead I've known tedium, humiliation and got shackled up with the psycho from hell."¹⁸

However, out of the friction between life and older dramatic models—and even cinematic ones—can come the light of "meaning." When the actors first arrive at the church, a long shot down the main hallway of the building reveals its immensity in an obvious parody of the spatial and aesthetic boundaries that define Olivier's *Hamlet*. Yet even as Branagh parodies the cinematic atmosphere of Olivier's film as "People in space, in smoke" (Figure 2), it attests to the power of that image, as Fadge, the set-designer, confirms when she first walks into the church: "You know this place is incredible. I feel something very powerful here. Very strange and powerful."¹⁹ In these moments Branagh forces his audience to confront its own contradictory responses to an apparently subsumed but recognizably conventional model of

Olivier's *Hamlet* which *A Midwinter's Tale* repudiates with the illusion that it uses no art at all.

However, the film also promotes reflexivity by calling attention to the cinematic apparatus itself through abrupt cuts between scenes juxtaposed to the static frames that announce each sequence. The fleeting procession of images and rapid dialogue seem momentarily frozen in their progression—and mimetically derealized—when the spectator's view shifts from a conventional impression of reality to the darkened screen that compartmentalizes each sequence under subtitles such as "Prologue: 'I have to talk to my agent.'" The visual effect is a double movement, so to speak, from mimesis to deconstruction, in that the film gestures towards a conventional impression of reality that rejects Olivier's elaborate expressionistic sets while cinematically presenting a sort of visual semiotics that momentarily halts the viewers' identification with seamless characters and plots.

Yet by parodying the cinematic space in which Olivier dramatized *Hamlet* and deconstructing the cultural space that appropriated Shakespeare's theatre (including vaudeville, which, as Joe tells Terry, gave "Shakespeare a bad name"), the film works through representational strategies that authorize its concluding vision of dramatic practice. Branagh takes Hamlet's role, atrophied into predictable performances through critical commentary and theatre history, and makes it unpredictable by exploring both the inner resources of the play—the ambiguity of textual signs in "play"—and the outer resources of actors determined to bring Hamlet to Hope during the Christmas season. Although the film confronts the problem that traditional genres may not be fully adequate to the imaginative needs of our time, the transformational context of the film brings the audience to a realization that, even within a multiple and decentered perspective, the play can still be meaningful. The film makes us aware of what Stephen Orgel has called the "poetics of incomprehensibility" in Shakespeare's drama. Orgel points to *The Winter's Tale*, a play whose elliptical and often obscure diction and syntax have resisted the elucidation of centuries of editors and critics, and warns that although "Plays may start as private musings; they end as scripts performed by actors for spectators, and their success depends on what they convey to those spectators."²⁰ Lynn Enterline also observes of *The Winter's Tale* that the play concentrates upon the misframing "that happens in 'this place' of the theatre" when the stage turns "into a space of unpredictable events" of self-reflexive "performative utterances" of the here and now.²¹ These observations have relevance to Branagh's film,

not solely because of the film's derivative title, but because it also begins with a "private musing" that ends as a playscript misframed in the space of unpredictable and self-reflexive theatrical performances, much as the sallies that bombard the actors' conversations necessitate that the audience reframe or transform language into the personalized speech of the performers themselves. As one of the characters asks, "Is this entire production going to be conducted through a stream of innuendo?"²² When the actors read through the play for the first time together, around a large table and in an atmosphere that gets progressively smoke-filled and chaotic, the viewer also experiences how the play may be "read through" the dislocations of private musings and playful vulgarisms, criticism and theatre practice, thereby permitting a re-examination of the play from de-centered and shifting perspectives.

Although the film squarely counters theatrical aesthetics as idealized by the elderly Henry and his nostalgia for the legendary performances of Henry Irving and his resistance to gay casting, the film does so more to alert us to what has changed in the way we experience Shakespeare than to ridicule Henry as "old school" or because he is reluctant to embrace the obvious erosion of the humanistic certainties associated with the acting tradition. Similarly, although the film de-romanticizes and exposes aspects of *Hamlet* and its theatrical and cinematic past through burlesque and parody, the ultimate effect of Branagh's film is a nostalgic invocation of a great and distinctly English theatrical tradition, even as we sense how removed we are from that earlier time. *A Midwinter's Tale* actively encourages the cultivation of nostalgia: we see the play's Claudius and Gertrude in make-up that recalls the silent Shakespeare films of the early century, and we hear Joe romanticize about "Shakespeare's own theatre," when "a six-week season would have produced thirty-five performances of seventeen different plays including at times four world premieres."²³ As far from the plot of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as this film seems to take the audience, it ultimately brings it deeper into the world of actor, script, and theatre that is played out in the English countryside of Hope in an abandoned church before the faithful few. The film immerses us in the nostalgic past of English theatre even as it demythologizes the acting process and the supposed sanctity of the Shakespearean text, exploding the myths of the acting tradition even as it affirms the origins of English theatre as a reflection of human aspirations and need.

II. "For O, for O, the hobbyhorse is forgot"

In both *Hamlet* and *A Midwinter's Tale* the function of tradition is almost identical with that of the theatre itself. In Shakespeare's play the signs and patterns of tradition and ritual suffer "the selective neglect of cultural structures," so that, as Naomi Liebler observes, "The commands of tradition and ritual processes run through *Hamlet* like the understage voice of the ghost."²⁴ Branagh's film takes the central issues of *Hamlet*—the changing times that problematize the value of the past and the evaporation of old customs—and highlights them through the actor's perception of living in changing times that value Hollywood spacemen over Shakespearean actors. The actors reveal how they, too, are "haunted" by the dead forms of tradition in their sepulchral theatre. When two of these actors make their beds in the crypt, they joke about the relationship between the space in which they reside and their art. One asks, "Do you think they might be trying to imply something about our acting?" to which the other actor puns, "What, that it's a bit cryptic?" "No," the actor first explains, "that it's dead."

In *Hamlet* rituals are either corrupted or truncated, as evidenced by the funeral-marriage-coronation that begins the play, Claudius' failed confessional, Ophelia's abbreviated funeral ceremony, and the procession that crowns Fortinbras as king at the play's end. As Shakespeare's drama demonstrates, without the mediation of a shared set of references, however fractured, Hamlet experiences the collapse of traditional boundaries. Joe Harper's recuperative gestures underscore that he is also radically detached from these ritual patterns. The film reveals the breakdown of the historical and cultural values of the past by exposing the contradictory possibilities of interpretation and the theatre's absorption with its own artifacts, styles, and techniques. The actors repeatedly express nostalgia for a lost epoch of human faith in yearning for an earlier "romantic" time when "the old Shakespeare Companies" travelled "from town to town on a Sunday" with hundreds of people waving them off from the platform and for the great Shakespearean actors of an earlier day (in Henry Wakefield's tribute to Irving's *Othello* and Joe Harper's obsession with Olivier).²⁵ In their longing for the perennial wisdom of the theatre, the actors self-consciously articulate their lack of continuity with a theatrical past that has been lost at the level of signs. Yet even as this production parodies theatrical tradition, for example, in casting the flamboyantly cross-dressed and homosexual Terry as Queen Gertrude, the

actor underscores his relationship to the dramatic past he deconstructs: "Darling, just 'cos I'm in a frock at the end of a pier, doesn't mean I don't have a grasp of theatrical history."²⁶

In that the actors' reminiscences verge at times on religious awe (as underscored by the circumstances of the actors' performance of Shakespearean tragedy in an abandoned church at Christmas-time), the convergences of these rituals, both Shakespearean and religious, suggest the memory of our communal heritage, and the lost social function of that memory, a concern that Hamlet articulates satirically as "'For O, for O, the hobbyhorse is forgot'" (III. ii. 133). Naomi Liebler observes that Hamlet's comment speaks to a paradoxical awareness of ritual both lost and recalled, its "continuity contested by suppression, while its remembrance signifies resistance to change."²⁷ In this respect, Branagh's comic references to tradition are as purposeful as Hamlet's, in that he claims legitimacy for an apparently abandoned theatrical tradition, that, like the hobbyhorse, is forgotten. These lines are also meaningful in the context of the film's assertion that the public's rites of memory are inseparable from the cultural impact of Shakespeare's drama, in that the text remains essentially incomplete without them.

However, as Joe's agent, Margaretta, smugly suggests, for its practitioners, the spiritual and psychological resources of theatrical ritual remain unabated, despite the public's loss of memory. When Joe admits that he's "feeling less suicidal now" with rehearsals for *Hamlet* actually in progress, Margaretta confidently asserts, "Then it's working. Marvellous. Good night, sweet prince."²⁸ In likening Joe's resurrection to Hamlet's death, Margaretta connects Joe's psychological salvation with Hamlet's spiritual and secular salvation. For, as Howard Felperin argues, although Horatio's lines construct a morality play analogy for Hamlet's end, Hamlet's dying words articulate a concern for his "*secular* salvation" and his "wounded name" that survive him in history.²⁹ It seems that Branagh's film would have it both ways as well, in that Joe Harper seeks to preserve his "wounded" professional name before the all too-worldly financial considerations of Hollywood producers and agents while celebrating the miraculous transformative power of Shakespeare's drama as founded upon spiritual and theatrical ritual. The visual emphasis in the film shares this dual perspective, for although the actors' rehearsals reveal that their craft is the product of hard work, not inspiration, the cavernous Gothic church in which they rehearse inspires associations with the religious sanctifications of medieval art and resuscitates the memory of tradition and ritual processes.

In their comic rehearsals of *Hamlet*, the actors discover some sense of continuity between the dramatic form and the spiritual resources it draws upon. Ironically, as unstable in dramatic form as *Hamlet* appears in Branagh's film, it supplies inspiration and feelings normally unavailable to ordinary people, revealing how Shakespeare's theatre can function as an existential and nonfictional use of memory and emotion for ordinary human beings. Indeed, *A Midwinter's Tale* reveals how Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is the central catalyst for reviving an actor's faith in himself, recalling Wilson Knight's comment that "we need expect no Messiah, but we might, at this hour, turn to Shakespeare."³⁰

Unlike Shakespeare's play, which tells its audience that this is *not* "that Season . . . / Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated," Branagh's film does return the viewer to the time of the Messiah. The ritual of putting on a play at Christmas-time reveals the frame of a culture's collective values at the intersection of the traditional and the improvised, the sacred and the secular. The pivot of time in Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* is the authentic pivot of time, the Christ event, or Christmas, from which all meaning or typological representation flows. Yet in the film we immediately perceive a tension between what we might call theology and psychoanalysis, or the displacements of characters we associate with depression and hidden sexual thematics. It is significant that in this film there is a character who resolutely refuses to "see," but who is also associated with the typology of the Christ story through her story of sacrifice, loss, and restoration (Nina's husband, as Nina tells Joe Harper, died tragically at the age of thirty-three). In this respect *A Midwinter's Tale* is both nostalgia and parody—a comic union of desire and mystical insight—that enables this small community of actors to rekindle hope and redress its wrongs, motivated by an actor-Hamlet who discovers himself in the reciprocal relations of a community of actors and its individual members.

As Barbara Everett observes, *Hamlet* has a "Christmassy" quality for theatrical audiences, in that it is a drama frequently produced for the Christmas season, along with detective stories and thrillers, for reasons she believes has to do with the play's "profoundly reminiscential, nostalgic, obscurely looking back" qualities.³¹ The Christmas reference is intrinsic to *Hamlet*'s story—perhaps as one more marker of "meaning" having been emptied out of the play's signs and rituals—even as Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* folds Christmas-time back into *Hamlet* as holiday entertainment, comically illustrating the recursive character of framing. In an interview when he was starring in Adrian Noble's

1992-93 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Hamlet*, Kenneth Branagh was asked about "the reasoning behind setting the action against the Christmas season," and responded that "It was possibly that we were rehearsing near Christmas, that there was something in the air which just made it pungent."³² Certainly Branagh's film is not the first narrative to place Hamlet's drama comically in conjunction with the Christmas season.³³ The film illustrates how dramaturgy invariably exceeds the boundaries of its representation and suggests a continuity in the resources of its representation in which *A Midwinter's Tale* is a significant but partial link in the supplemental chain of cultural and literary references that work both inside and outside the play.

In exploring the margins of textuality, the film also explores theatre at the margins, a place where negated actors, theatres, and performances come to the center, and where festive laughter urges a symbolic victory over the oppressive concerns of finances, personal loss, and Hollywood. Part of the film's interrogation of traditional boundaries and of any single, domineering interpretation is its subversion of the social hierarchies that preserve aesthetic unity, and, by implication, their political significance. Branagh illuminates how film occupies a space at the intersection of historical, theatrical, financial, and cultural dissonances, which are amplified in the cavernous interior of the play's church location rather than solved. Here the forces of Hollywood materialism and vulgarity finally intrude upon the church's theatrical space on opening night, luring away one of the actors to play a spaceman in latex and even carrying off some of Fadge's designs. But as Fadge's struggle to come up with a design for their production makes clear, the miniature model of the church and the cardboard people seated among the audience members simply reflect the actual space they inhabit, much as this film emphasizes that art unavoidably reveals its principles of construction (figure 3). And that includes financial aspects of art's creation. For although *A Midwinter's Tale* crystalizes and actualizes the utopian desires of the little community of actors who pool their collective energies and resources to raise the funds for their production of *Hamlet*, it also exposes the enterprise's degraded expression. When Harper ruminates, "Well, we can't charge proper ticket prices, that's not what it's about, anyway," in the same breath he obsesses about the financial arrangements by which he hopes to garner "an average donation of £2.50, that is £750 per night, which makes it £5,250 for the run, less £2100 for the production budget and rent, less £100 per week per person profit-share (hopefully) for three weeks for eight people, less

£150 for the first night drinks and Christmas dinner, less £600 for food and utilities."³⁴ In other words, market considerations and finances are, to a great extent, "what it's about." The film firmly rejects idealized conceptions of art and its romantic myths by dramatizing the economic forces that impinge upon the actor's craft.

"Why must the show go on?" the film repeatedly asks. Joe's agent warns him, "at this time of year, everyone is doing Christmas shows or TV specials so all you are going to get is eccentrics, misfits and nutters."³⁵ The casting call that Joe advertises alerts the viewer to the peculiar enterprise that will unfold on Christmas eve with *Hamlet* as its vehicle. The agent reads: "a cooperative experience," "profit-share, 'spirit share,'" "six fellow journeymen to enter the gloomy dane," "apply to the director and sweat prince."³⁶ The typographical errors alert the viewer to the flip side of Joe's dreamy visionary perspective, that the enterprise can be depressing and unrequited labor, work in a sweat shop and not the lofty enterprise he hopes.

Whereas *Hamlet* explores the constitutive liminalities of the protagonist and those of his community, Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* dramatizes the liminal status of Shakespeare's art in late twentieth century culture through the political and artistic vulnerability of the actor and his community. The film refracts the social realities of the theatre practitioner through the prism of Shakespeare's drama and exposes the ideology and false consciousness that render art nothing more than another economic category. It also exposes the devices of art while being itself a critical instrument of art, stripping the play of its mystical wrappings and seeming to devalue the script through parody (as seen in the parade of incompetent actors at the beginning of the film). But Branagh distances us from the play in order to allow us to come back to it, more involved, more fully believing in the illusions that foster hope. Harper's cynical comment to Nina—"Finally it's Shakespeare and nobody's interested"—is delivered just as he leaves the cast for a lucrative three-picture deal with a Hollywood producer.³⁷ But, like Hamlet, Joe returns to play out the final scene. His artistic integrity and heart win out over the temptations of Hollywood, commercialism, and material gain.

In Branagh's film the narrative of the two stories, Hamlet's and Joe's, follows parallel trajectories of the carnivalesque by implying an attitude of creative disrespect and a radical opposition to the illegitimately powerful. In the opening moments of the film Branagh distinguishes between a hierarchy of arts—with Hollywood film and television at its bottom, as hopelessly

vulgar and tainted, and Shakespeare's drama at its apex, with its sacred space of ritual and ancient tragedy. The American producer, Nancy Crawford (Jennifer Saunders), who appears at the end of the film clearly represents the mundane and the average, the black hole into which the privileged space of theatre has drifted. Hence her insistence upon rendering Fadge's name into a part of the female anatomy, taking all that is sublime or mysterious and rendering it carnal, banal, or absurd. The Hollywood producer degrades and vulgarizes playing Shakespeare, even as she vulgarizes the play's spatial relationships, transforming Tom into a spaceman and Fadge into Vadge. Is this the "fairytale" that Joe envisions? Or, as another suggests, "Bloody nightmare more like it." Yet in the theatrical space of the Hope *Hamlet* even these opposing hierarchies of value becomes confused and conflated when high art meets low art. Here even a Hollywood producer can enjoy, however imperfectly, an imperfect Shakespearean production, and a Shakespearean actor obsessed with his craft discovers he has the requisite "character" to play a spaceman beneath layers of latex.

Joe begins the film questioning the meaning of things—whether life can be like an old movie—*The Wizard of Oz* with "family murders" and a fairy-tale ending—but it is Nina who intones the film's final message, "Listen, everyone, Merry Christmas!" in a long shot of the lit church, alive with love and hope on Christmas eve. Like Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, Branagh's film reveals that, even as ritual is undone or questioned, it is remade again at the end, perhaps not as Shakespeare envisioned it, but faithful, nonetheless, to the fragments perpetually in process that we call "Shakespeare." Although many of the jokes in this film derive from Branagh's cultural ransacking and his critique of the theatre's advanced stages of consumerism, the film ultimately enshrines Shakespeare's art as a recourse to another plane of existence and means to begin a moral pilgrimage towards purification. The "blessing" that concludes *A Midwinter's Tale* resonates within the context of the parental blessings that affirm the bonds between parent and child in *The Winter's Tale* (in that Branagh conflates both theatrical and biological families in the comic resolution of the film) in a celebration of art as an expression of divine grace and good will, graciousness, and generosity. That blessing does not set itself apart from the experiences of the characters in the film but exists at the convergence of the spaces of ritual, both sacred and theatrical. Nina's effusion affirms the sacredness of this world and the ordinary people in it and, in particular, Joe Harper's decision to rejoin his theatrical community, which prom-

ises an enrichment of his personal identity.

Branagh's film embraces Shakespeare with a sophisticated awareness of generic expectations and constructs, not with creative exhaustion, but exhilarated by imaginative possibilities. *A Midwinter's Tale* "works" because it breathes life into the language of the play, where speaking lines becomes again the language of living, breathing characters, and not the frozen forms of theatrical tradition.

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Notes

¹All references to Shakespeare's plays are from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, fourth edition, ed. David Bevington (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). Paul Meier, "Kenneth Branagh with Utter Clarity: An Interview," *The Drama Review: The Journal of Performance Studies*, 41 (1997), p. 88.

²Meier, p. 84.

³In fact, Branagh's film comically recalls Robert Lepage's directoral strategies in a Royal National Theatre production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which, according to Susan Bennett, attempted "to disavow the fetish of Shakespeare's text" by introducing "the text 'at the end' of the rehearsal period" (*Performing Nostalgia: Shifting Shakespeare and the Contemporary Past* [London and New York: Routledge, 1996], pp. 19-20).

⁴Leo Brady, *Native Informant: Essays on Film, Fiction, and Popular Culture* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), p. 201.

⁵Kenneth Branagh, *A Midwinter's Tale: The Shooting Script* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1996), p. 30.

⁶Brady, p. 211.

⁷The phrase "rim of the frame" and the description of differentiated transformational framing in *Hamlet* is derived from Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974).

⁸Robert Weimann, "Representation and Performance: The Uses of Authority in Shakespeare's Theatre," *PMLA*, 107 (1992), p. 503.

⁹Goffman, p. 262.

¹⁰Barbara Freedman, *Staging the Gaze: Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis, and Shakespearean Comedy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), p. 70.

¹¹Branagh, p. 104.

¹²Weimann, p. 499.

¹³Branagh, p. 17.

¹⁴Weimann, p. 498.

¹⁵Barbara Everett, *Young Hamlet: Essays on Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 14.

¹⁶See Stephen M. Buhler's article "Double Takes: Branagh Gets to *Hamlet*," *Post Script*, 17 (1997), 43-52, for a discussion of the relationship between Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale* and Olivier's *Hamlet*.

¹⁷Branagh, p. 64.

¹⁸Branagh, p. 2.

The Upstart Crow

¹⁹Branagh, p. 22.

²⁰Stephen Orgel, "The Poetics of Incomprehensibility," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42 (1991), p. 436.

²¹Lynn Enterline, "'You speak a language that I understand not': The Rhetoric of Animation in *The Winter's Tale*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48 (1997), p. 37.

²²Branagh, p. 22.

²³Branagh, p. 62.

²⁴Naomi Conn Liebler, *Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: The Ritual Foundations of Genre* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 192.

²⁵Branagh, p. 63.

²⁶Branagh, p. 64.

²⁷Liebler, p. 194.

²⁸Branagh, p. 53.

²⁹Howard Felperin, *Shakespearean Representations: Mimesis and Modernity in Elizabethan Tragedy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 65.

³⁰Wilson Knight, *The Olive and the Sword* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1944), p. 3.

³¹Everett, p. 14.

³²Samuel Crowl, "Hamlet 'Most Royal': An Interview with Kenneth Branagh," *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 12, (1994), p. 7.

³³Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) is notable among the film's literary predecessors in its depiction of the critical intervals and asides that punctuate Garrick's performance of *Hamlet* at a time close to the winter solstice in 1745, in which Partridge's emotional response to Garrick's performance and the appearance of the ghost expose an unsettling indeterminacy of boundaries between fictional levels. See John Allen Stevenson, "Fielding's Mousetrap: Hamlet, Partridge, and the '45,'" *Studies in English Literature*, 37 (1997), pp. 559-60.

³⁴Branagh, p. 65.

³⁵Branagh, p. 3.

³⁶Branagh, pp. 4-5.

³⁷Branagh, p. 95.



Figure 1. The Cast of the Hope Hamlet in
Branagh's *A Midwinter's Tale*
(Courtesy of Castle Rock Entertainment).



Figure 2. Joe Harper (Michael Maloney) as Hamlet in *A Midwinter's Tale* (Courtesy of Castle Rock Entertainment).



Figure 3. The Audience, Both Real and Imaginary, Opening Night in *A Midwinter's Tale* (Courtesy of Castle Rock Entertainment).

Image to Image: Gold's Revisioning of the Appetitive Imagery in the BBC *Macbeth* by Nancy Glass Hancock

Writing in the earlier days of Shakespeare-on-film, Roger Manvell cautioned that moving Shakespeare's plays from stage to screen could be like trying to mix "oil and water."¹ Manvell's concern was that the *aural* foundation of the plays—their poetic language—would be intrinsically in conflict with the *visual* medium of film. However, in the three decades since that cautionary outlook, we have seen in presenting Shakespeare on film that oil and water can mix quite well—even when our definition of Shakespeare-on-film includes Shakespeare-on-television.

To make Shakespeare's poetic language come alive on television requires effectively reformatting verbal images to visual images, for the ideological base of a play is its imagery. Unhappily, today Shakespeare's language often seems unfamiliar, obscuring the power of the imagery and undermining its portrayal of Shakespeare's world. Happily, however, reformatting Shakespeare's imagery for television offers a viable solution to this dilemma and extends an exciting field of Shakespearean studies, combining a close reading of text with a critical viewing of film. This essay presents as a test case the made-for-television *Macbeth* of 1982, directed by Jack Gold, for the BBC Shakespeare Series.² In an interview with Michèle Willems, Gold stated that making Shakespeare's language "intelligible" (qtd. in Willems, 43) was one of his primary goals in directing *Macbeth* for the series.³ Discussing his televisual choices, Gold stated: ". . . you don't do Shakespeare for the plots, you do it for the language. So I tried to find compositions, within the camera, that would make the dialogue clear" (qtd. in Willems, 59).

The BBC *Macbeth* is, in my view, an undervalued production that deserves another look. Through its televisual choices utilizing the house-rules of the series as enhancements rather than limitations, this production effectively illustrates verbal images enhanced by visual representations. Jack Gold demonstrates what the camera can do with compositions that are aware of the television medium and that creatively convey the unity of Shakespeare's verbal images through visual images designed for televisual space. The medium of television is well suited to this most compressed of the tragedies with its intimate focus on how political appetite devours personhood, causing nihilistic starva-

tion. The BBC production recreates Shakespeare's appetite-driven couple replete with meaning for our late-twentieth century sensibilities. This essay looks at three televisual aspects of the production, examining how Shakespeare's imagery of appetite moves successfully from text to television. The three areas of focus are: 1) the suggestive role of the Weird Sisters; 2) the predatory sexuality of Lady Macbeth; and 3) the Dunsinane Castle gate as symbolic appetite.

I. The Weird Sisters and Macbeth's Political Appetite

Gold's depiction of the Weird Sisters is quietly forceful. Neither wildly fantastical creatures nor unkempt bag ladies, the Weird Sisters first appear to be boulders, hardly noticeable in the mist atop an angular stone formation suggesting the ancient mystery of Stonehenge. One by one, they rise slowly, revealing human form. Their simple, draped clothing—with shawls covering heads and falling over figures—is functional, making them appear unobtrusive and shapeless. The costume complements their overall quiet, low-key performance.⁴

In this production, the Weird Sisters *work* because their portrayal is topical—easy for a postmodern audience to accept. In his *Riverside* introduction to *Macbeth*, Frank Kermode discusses the problems inherent in a play based on a Renaissance understanding of witches. He states that this seventeenth century topicality might be a reason *Macbeth* does not always play well today.⁵ However, Gold's handling of the Weird Sisters and their relation to Macbeth is consistent with present-day understanding of the mind and its ability to project physical effects. Gold relates the Weird Sisters to Macbeth's imagination: what sets it off, what feeds it, what it devours. The Weird Sisters are more than figments of Macbeth's active imagination: Clearly Banquo sees them, too. However, this production never suggests that they *cause* Macbeth's appetite or its tragic outcome. Unlike Orson Welles' voodoo witches who mold and manipulate a clay Macbeth, Gold's Weird Sisters simply nurture a political appetite that already exists in Macbeth when he first meets the trio.

Geoffrey Bullough calls Lady Macbeth's question "What beast was't then, / That made you break this enterprise to me?" (I. vii. 47-48) "the most obvious loose end" among several ambiguous points in Shakespeare's text.⁶ In Bullough's interpretation, Macbeth did *not* "break this enterprise" of murdering Duncan to his wife for the first time after meeting the Weird Sisters. Bullough

concludes that “before our play opens [Macbeth must have] discussed with Lady Macbeth a potential murder of Duncan” (423). Interestingly, Bullough notes that Gruoch, the wife of the historical Macbeth, also had a claim to the throne under the customs of succession practiced in medieval Scotland (432). Certainly this historical context is significant in speculating about the source of the Macbeths’ political aspirations, relevant in both Shakespeare’s text and in Gold’s revisioning. Critical speculation about textual unevenness or the possibility of a now-lost scene in which Macbeth overtly discusses his political aspirations with Lady Macbeth is irrelevant in the context of this argument. What is relevant is Macbeth’s reaction to Duncan’s naming Malcolm his successor coupled with Lady Macbeth’s reaction to the imminent arrival of Duncan and her quick determination that he must never leave. She seems to have no doubt that Macbeth will be king once Duncan is removed.

In the BBC production, when Duncan names Malcolm his successor, the *mise en scène* represents Macbeth’s disappointment through Williamson’s distancing himself from the crowd and soliloquizing on the apparently unexpected obstacle presented by Malcolm. Additionally, the *mise en scène* emphasizes Banquo’s interest in Macbeth’s reaction. That Shakespeare’s Macbeth might previously have imagined himself as king is reasonable, for succession in medieval Scotland was not based on primogeniture, which Duncan tries to set in place through naming Malcolm (his elder son) as his successor. In practice, however, as Bullough discusses, *tanistry*, an ancient Celtic system of alternate succession combined with popular election, was in place. Through *tanistry*, the historical Macbeth’s claim to the throne was as valid as Duncan’s, both men coming from branches of the same ancestral line. Unlike Malcolm, who was both younger in years and less established in reputation than Macbeth, Macbeth might well have hoped to be Duncan’s *tanist* or successor.⁷

Might Macbeth not even be an anomaly in human nature had he not, at least within his imagination, tried on Duncan’s kingly robes? Thus, it is important to recognize that the Weird Sisters, as Shakespeare conceived them, can forecast, whet, and feed, but they are not responsible for Macbeth’s political appetite or its outcome—a view Gold’s understated characterization of the Weird Sisters conveys. After the opening scene of the BBC production, the Sisters do not appear again simply as boulders, seeming to emerge from an ancient landscape. They have been personified for us—and for Macbeth. They are *real*. However, it is Macbeth who invokes their power, opening himself to their prophecy

through his own imagination.

A passage from James I's treatise on demonology—most likely well known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries—helps to clarify the context for the Weird Sisters and their relationship to Macbeth. James writes:

. . . it is most certaine, that God will not permit [the devil] fo to deceiue his own: but only fuch, as firft wilfully deceiues them-felves, by running vnto him, whome God then fuffers to fall in their owne fnares, and iuftlie permittes them to be illuded with great efficacy of deceit, becaufe they would not beleeeue the trueth.⁸

Macbeth is framed by this context: He opens himself to evil and becomes the prey of his own political appetite, aroused likely through the system of succession he knows. This is the basis for his vulnerability to the suggestions of the Weird Sisters intensified by his concern when Malcolm is named to succeed Duncan. Gold's depiction of Macbeth's response not only helps clarify Shakespeare's context (a context likely to have been better understood by an early modern audience than by our own, accustomed as we are to primogeniture), but also the BBC depiction is consistent with the thought of the times concerning both succession and theology.

A key scene portraying the Weird Sisters and their interaction with Macbeth's political appetite is the "hell-broth" scene (IV. i). In choosing to emphasize the centrality of banqueting in *Macbeth*, Gold combines one of his rare cuts with a transposition, situating the "hell-broth" scene immediately after the aborted banquet featuring Banquo's ghost. This juxtaposition of two banquets—both of them ironic in their perversion of a nurturing banquet—is a dramatic and thematic success.⁹ We shall look briefly at the main banquet then move to the corresponding banquet of the witches, observing how they complement each other through Gold's televisual choices.

After an uneasy beginning to the banquet that is the structural turning point both of Shakespeare's play (III. iv) and of Gold's revisioning, Lady Macbeth reminds Macbeth of his duty, and he musters a false heartiness to give the toast: "Now good digestion wait on appetite, / And health on both!" (III. iv. 37-38). The irony of this toast focusing on nurturing appetite is clear. In the BBC production, the most memorable view of Macbeth's aborted banquet is of the long banquet table—stately and well appointed, its carefully laid-out food untouched, Macbeth's chalice overturned—symbols of disorder in a society where order, normally emanating

from its king, is the ideological center.¹⁰ After the guests leave in disarray, the abandoned table receives full-screen attention, the Macbeths cowering in the background at the far end. This table shot is an effective prelude to the witch banquet where Gold takes us next.

Significantly, in the crucial encounter with the Weird Sisters following the aborted banquet at the play's center, Gold follows Shakespeare's text by having Macbeth seek and find the witches—another clue that it is he, not they, who drives the tragic action. Macbeth also threatens to curse them if they do not tell him what they can see. In two medium-long shots, Macbeth huddles with the Weird Sisters over the cauldron of "hell-broth" (IV. i. 19) like a coven of four. Once the visions of the future begin, the camera focuses entirely on Macbeth, using full-face shots showcasing eyes and forehead as if to suggest an inner eye through which Macbeth looks. As his gaze pierces the pictures only he can see, his eyes are opened wide, fixed, with only the slightest blink or shift discernible. What the camera shows is Macbeth and his physical reactions to mental visions. In this important scene and throughout his role as Macbeth, Nicol Williamson's voice moves between two registers, providing a physical manifestation of the mind's equivocation. The lighter register conveys the fearful outlook while the heavier register conveys the hopeful one, an appropriate vehicle for the doubleness in Macbeth's nature and in the play as a whole.¹¹

The Weird Sisters are central in three scenes (I. i, I. iii, and IV. i); however, Gold keeps them suggestively before us in cameo shots at a number of key places. For example, immediately after Malcolm and Donalbain escape Macbeth's castle, a three-shot shows the Weird Sisters clearly inside the castle, suggesting that their influence has been admitted by Macbeth. This cameo shot is consistent with Shakespeare's location of evil within the castle although he never places the Weird Sisters physically within Dunsinane, as Gold does briefly here. Gold's location of the trio heightens our awareness of how completely the appetite they nurture is infiltrating and overturning what should be Macbeth's orderly domain. Their presence in the castle suggests the overthrow of natural order which Shakespeare images through Duncan's cannibal horses and other predators. This particular cameo is an effective use of foreshadowing to conclude Part I and whet the audience's appetite for Part II and the ensuing tragedy.

Near the play's end, Gold uses a cameo where we see the threesome sitting on a hillock just prior to the advance of Birnam Wood on Dunsinane. Here the effect is heightened by a dissolve,

with the ghostly vestige of the advancing army, its spears raised, superimposed on the Weird Sisters. The most dramatic cameo of the Weird Sisters occurs in the final shot of the castle gate, which we shall explore later in considering the symbolism uniquely conveyed by the gate. In all of these instances, the Weird Sisters never say or do anything; their mere presence speaks volumes and reminds us of their role in sustaining Macbeth's appetite.

II. Lady Macbeth's Sexuality in Relation to Appetite and Gender

A second televisual aspect of Gold's direction focuses on appetite in relation to gender and sexuality. The BBC production encourages dual meanings of appetite through angle of view, timing, and development of a serpent motif to highlight the complex interplay among political appetite, gender, and sexual appetite. All of these converge in the character of Lady Macbeth, played in the BBC production by Jane Lapotaire.

In Shakespeare's play and in Gold's revisioning, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth share both kinds of appetite: political and sexual. In the first half of the play, Lady Macbeth often acts as *de facto* king, a position she nurtures through perverting aspects of her womanhood. She—not unlike the Weird Sisters—whets and feeds Macbeth's political appetite through manipulating her womanhood and through encouraging him to act as a man. At times she even uses a wheedling "If you love me you will" ploy.

Lady Macbeth, no less than Macbeth himself, traffics with dark powers—visualized dramatically in this BBC production through a sexually explicit sequence that transcends erotica for its own sake to become an integral restatement of predatory appetite. The effectiveness of Gold's handling of act one, scene five is particularly noteworthy if we recall Polanski's handling of the same scene. In Polanski's *Macbeth*, we hear Lady Macbeth's "unsex me" speech in a voice-over, indicating that she thinks the words to herself while descending the castle steps. Nothing in her conveyance of the words, facial expression, or movement suggests the perniciousness of her invitation to evil. Gold's treatment of the scene, on the other hand, has televisual value, exploiting the intimacy of the medium. In the BBC production, Lady Macbeth reads her husband's letter revealing the prophecies; then she immediately calls on the powers of darkness, literally inviting them into her body through intercourse that is both physical and spiritual. Her union with evil subsequently perverts the nurturing qualities inherent in womanhood, committing her

whole being to dark service. Contemplating Macbeth's letter—especially her concerns that he might not be manly enough "To catch the nearest way" (I. v. 18) to the crown—she begins to breathe rapidly, throws herself down with legs spread onto a fur-covered palette, and confidently invites the spirits of darkness to "unsex" her (I. v. 41). In an intense sequence, the camera assumes the position of a lover descending upon her. It records her vivid response to the dark spirits, traveling from a full-body shot, up her torso, past the breasts she kneads passionately, until the camera lens is very close to her face just above eye-level, simulating a sexual partner. The scene builds with frenzy until her "Hold, hold!" (I. v. 54) is orgasmic. Throughout this sexually explicit sequence, Lady Macbeth wears a dress with a tightly-fitting bodice, featuring a cord tied at the waist and dropping V-shaped to a tassel. As she opens her legs to admit the spirits, the folds of her skirt emphasize her sexual posture. The costume here and elsewhere—especially after she adds two medallions just above breast-level—suggests a caricature of the female body.¹²

At her moment of orgasm, Macbeth enters the camera view. With both of the Macbeths somewhat aroused, they talk of Duncan's eminent arrival; but the discussion is one-sided as Lady Macbeth instructs her husband in what must happen. He is reluctant, but Lady Macbeth's "Leave all the rest to me" (I. v. 73) is punctuated with manipulative kisses. Their prelude to lovemaking dissolves to the scene where Duncan and his entourage arrive at the gate of Dunsinane Castle, where ironically Duncan is to be guest of honor. Shakespeare serves delicious irony that Gold seasons for televisual effect. Near the beginning of the play, when Duncan hears how nobly Macbeth has conducted himself, Duncan comments to Banquo, "he [Macbeth] is full so valiant, / And in his commendations I am *fed*; / It is a *banquet* to me" (I. iv. 54-56, emphasis mine). Thus, it is Duncan's words that introduce the imagery of appetite into the play. Gold builds on the irony of the imagery with interpolated scenes of a banquet—apparently Duncan's welcoming banquet—juxtaposed with shots of Duncan's benevolent and happy face close to Lady Macbeth's conniving one. A couple of dissolves move between the banquet and the plotting Macbeths, helping to make the point: The guest-of-honor is to be the main course! Decorum is violated as well as spiritual law since Duncan is king, senior kinsman, and guest in the Macbeths' home.

The imagery of poisonous serpent links to Lady Macbeth early in Shakespeare's play when she soliloquizes to an absent Macbeth:

. . . Hie thee hither,
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
 And chastise with the valor of my tongue
 All that impedes thee from the golden round,
 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
 To have thee crown'd withal.

(I. v. 25-30)

Lady Macbeth's poison is particularly evil because it figuratively replaces the mother's milk that should provide nurture, a point Gold's sexual emphasis highlights. Gold uses this reptilian association with Lady Macbeth, suggesting meaningful connections among Macbeth's "poison'd chalice" (I. vii. 11), the figurative poison Lady Macbeth pours, her vivid description of snatching the suckling baby from her breast, and Macbeth's overturned chalice at the end of the banquet scene. Verbal and visual images enhance each other, underscoring the irony of replacing nurturing milk with poison.

Gold retains Shakespeare's reptilian imagery in the scene where Lady Macbeth alternately whets Macbeth's political and sexual appetites, linking her advances with the predatory nature of the serpent. In later scenes, Gold's production extends this imagery televisually through the decor of the Macbeths' thrones, which we first see as Part II of the production opens. The serpentine design on Lady Macbeth's throne is simple and clear. However, the design on Macbeth's is intricate and convoluted, full of twists and knots crossing each other. Each throne is visually indicative of the complexity of its occupant's relation to evil. Much later in the BBC production—in the scene where Macduff kills Macbeth—we see clearly that the convoluted design on Macbeth's throne is indeed a serpent with an extremely long, coiled tail. Nicol Williamson as Macbeth cowers behind a corner of the throne—its serpent's head starkly prominent in front of Williamson—right after Macduff tells Macbeth he is not "of woman born" (V. viii. 13).

In Shakespeare's text, the issue of gender in relation to the predatory serpent emerges just before the midpoint of the play when Macbeth is feeling threatened by Banquo's life. He tells Lady Macbeth, "We have scorch'd the snake, not killed it; / *She'll* close and be *herself*, whilst our poor malice / Remains in danger of *her former tooth*" (III. ii. 13-15, emphasis mine). Shakespeare's personification of the snake as feminine is developed vividly in the BBC production through a powerful visual image at the beginning of Part II: Lady Macbeth's head and the serpent's head are juxtaposed evenly on the screen, the implications unmistak-

able. She is the serpent we recognize first and most clearly, as Gold suggests through the contrasting complexity of the designs on the two thrones.

Lady Macbeth's role as the Edenic temptress is intentional, reflecting no doubt the theology of the times on the depravity of woman. The following passage, from a sermon preached by Hugh Latimer before Edward VI, is illustrative of the tradition in which Lady Macbeth stands, both in Shakespeare's play and in Gold's revisioning:

Christ limiteth us to one wife only; and it is a great thing for a man to rule one wife rightly and ordinally. For a woman is frail, and proclive unto all evils; a woman is a very weak vessel, and may soon deceive a man and bring him unto all evils. . . . It is a very hard thing for a man to rule one woman well.¹³

"Weak vessel" aside, ultimately the responsibility is Macbeth's—and he accepts it with its consequences, a recognition that deepens his tragedy. Near the end of the play, Macbeth acknowledges that he has "supp'd full with horrors" (V. v. 13); his appetite has devoured both his manhood and his serpent-like personhood. Lady Macbeth may extend the fruit serpent-like, but Macbeth chooses to eat it and thus must endure the spiritual starvation that follows. In the BBC *Macbeth*, the relative positions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth represent visually their respective journeys down the path of spiritual starvation. Before the banquet scene where Macbeth reveals his guilt, Gold generally places Lady Macbeth in a leading position, a step or two ahead of her husband; however, when the banquet is aborted, so is Lady Macbeth's leadership. The dark spirits do, indeed, ravish both her body and her mind.

III. The Castle Gate as Symbol of Appetite

In the preceding two sections, we have been looking at ways Gold effectively re-visions some of the appetite imagery created by Shakespeare. The castle gate, however, is entirely Gold's invention—and a wonderfully suggestive one it is. Throughout the production, the gate of Macbeth's castle functions as a symbol of the voracious appetite that permeates Shakespeare's play. Gold utilizes the gate of Dunsinane Castle in complex combinations: It opens and closes with intentionality, sometimes letting in but sometimes confining within. The actual size and nature of the opening vary to suit the purpose of the scene. The gate is a simple

iron one consisting of five vertical spikes extending downward into sharp, angular points; the spikes are crossed by horizontal bars creating a grid effect. The gate first appears to be a typical entrance for a medieval fortress. However, this gate—like most aspects of *Macbeth*—has a double function. Set in a play where appetitive imagery and perverted banquets abound, the gate can easily be imagined as huge iron jaws, its vertical spikes suggesting fangs waiting to devour unsuspecting prey.

The BBC production configures the gate relative to the televisual frame. Most of the time, the gate dominates the frame in a front-shot. At times, it is prominently at the side of the picture or in a position showcasing action or character. The shots where the gate virtually fills the frame—looming large and menacing—are particularly effective on television whereas a similar castle gate would be dwarfed at the center of a traditional stage set. The restriction of the television medium thus becomes an advantage. Lighting and angle of view control the configuration of the gate. In the early shots of the gate, looking from outside, we see five fang-like spikes. However, as Macbeth gives in to the suggestions of the Weird Sisters, we usually view from Macbeth's internal perspective, seeing only three fangs—a displacement for the weird trio.

The vertical opening varies also in relation to action and theme. After Duncan and his men enter Macbeth's castle, the gate closes behind them decisively, foreshadowing the menacing castle. When Malcolm and Donalbain leave Dunsinane following their father's murder, the gate is almost fully open, facilitating their escape from Macbeth's political appetite. During the middle of the play, the gate is typically closed, forming a boundary between the evil inside the castle and the outside world. However, in act five when the invasion begins, the size of the opening and the emphasis on the fangs change with each entrance of the restorative force. Toward the end of the play, the threat of the fangs is increased by their reflection on the castle floor, discontinuing only at Macduff's entrance as the invasion purges the voracious appetite symbolized by the gate.

The castle gate doubles as primary background in two scenes—the Porter and the bearbaiting scenes—visually linking them thematically. The Porter refers to "Hell Gate" (II. iii. 2), observing "But this place is too cold for hell" (II. iii. 16-17), finally concluding "I'll devil-porter it no further" (II. iii. 17), thus equating the entrance to Macbeth's castle with the gate to hell itself. This context of hell extends figuratively when Macbeth tells the Murderers he is "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound" (III. iv. 23)

within his fears due to the perilous course of action he has begun.¹⁴ Macbeth's confinement within his personal hell intensifies when he imagines himself tethered as the baited bear, saying, "They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly, / But bear-like I must fight the course" (V. vii. 1-2). Gold creates this crucial moment through a combination of camera angle, focal length, and lighting—a scene that is brief but unforgettable, filling the televisual frame with a huge castle gate swallowing a tiny Macbeth. The five fangs of the gate are clear from the high angle of the camera which is looking through the gate from outside; however, only three fangs cast their shadows on the floor inside. The space is menacing and confining, dwarfing Macbeth as he paces tediously in very small circles. It is against this setting of Macbeth's personal hell and spiritual starvation that young Siward enters, easily ducking the fangs of the gate.

Occurring only seconds after the sequence discussed above, a memorable shot brings the fanged gate and the Weird Sisters on screen together for the first and only time. Here the symbolic depiction of appetite is complete: Within the frame are the Weird Sisters, each member of the threesome aligning with one of the three fangs. Their presence replaces the reflection of the fangs and fills in the lower half of the huge iron jaws. The Weird Sisters are suggestively the same height as the fangs are long. The fangs are in clear focus, the Weird Sisters slightly out of focus—signifying that Macbeth has devoured himself through the appetite the gate symbolizes, not through any direct power of the Weird Sisters. When Malcolm, Siward, and the rest of the restorative force arrive at the gate, its fangs are raised, no longer a menace.¹⁵

Shakespeare uses the specific word *appetite* only once in *Macbeth*, when Macbeth gives the toast at the ironic banquet. However, the concept of political appetite and its consequences permeates the play, resonating through a complex cluster of images, as we observe the tragic hero who has truly "supp'd full with horrors" (V. v. 13). Because the context of appetite is multifaceted in Shakespeare's play, a successful televisual portrayal must find ways to *simplify* the complexity while retaining the forcefulness of Shakespeare's imagery and conveying the ideology of his fictive world. This production effectively accomplishes the challenge through the televisual choices pertaining to the subtle depiction of the Weird Sisters, the predatory sexuality of Lady Macbeth, and the symbolic configuration of the Dunsinane Castle gate. Gold's creative reformatting of Shakespeare's appetitive imagery is a credit to both playwright and director, showing how well poetic language can become televisual and contem-

porary through the "tube theatre," an important stage for the re-visioning of Shakespeare in our time.

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Notes

¹Roger Manvell, *Shakespeare and the Film* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), 15.

²Jack Gold, dir. *Macbeth*, with Nicol Williamson and Jane Lapotaire (British Broadcasting Company, BBC Shakespeare Series, 1982), PBS, 17 October, 1983.

³See further Michèle Willems, "Entretien avec Jack Gold, réalisateur de *Macbeth* et de *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare à la télévision* (Rouen: Université de Rouen, 1987), 41-52 and Willems, "Table Ronde avec JackGold, réalisateur de *The Merchant of Venice*," 53-67.

⁴Here and elsewhere in this essay, my discussion of Gold's *Macbeth* no doubt implies comparisons with other productions of the play on video, in particular those of Trevor Nunn, Roman Polanski, and Orson Welles. However, I have with two exceptions (noted in my text) avoided direct comparisons with others, preferring to focus on the discrete merits of one production designed for the BBC TV series. See further Trevor Nunn, dir., *Macbeth*, with Ian McKellen and Judi Dench (Royal Shakespeare Company / Thames TV, 1979); Roman Polanski, dir., *Macbeth*, with Jon Finch and Francesca Annis (Playboy Productions / Caliban Films, 1971); Orson Welles, dir., *Macbeth*, with Orson Welles and Jeanette Nolan (Republic Pictures, 1948).

⁵Kermode discusses the topicality problem in detail. See Frank Kermode, "Introduction" to *The Tragedy of Macbeth, The Riverside Shakespeare*, pp. 1355-59. See especially p. 1355. Unless otherwise noted, all textual references are to this edition of *Macbeth*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans with J. J. M. Tobin (Boston: Houghton, 1997).

⁶Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. 7 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 431-33.

⁷Bullough defines tanistry as "a complicated system of alternate succession by different branches of a family whereby a member of the family of the King's predecessor inherited when a monarch died" (p. 431). Bullough also notes "an elective custom" invoked when "an heir seemed too young or incapable to bear the rigours of leadership in that wild age" (p. 432). Clearly, *Macbeth* is highly regarded by Duncan and by his own peers. We need to view the succession issue in *Macbeth* in this comprehensive historical context.

⁸James I, *Daemonologie* (Edinburgh, 1597.) Facsimile reprint No. 94. *The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile* (New York: Da Capo, 1969), p. 4.

⁹Gold deletes III. v. (in fact the entire role of Hecate in the play). Then he postpones III. vi. This change joins the two Lennox scenes, making *Macbeth's* encounter with Lennox, just after *Macbeth* has attended the witch banquet, stronger and more cohesive by eliminating division in the Lennox segment.

¹⁰Observing that the banquet table is a universal symbol of community and order, Michel Jeanneret cites numerous examples in Early Modern literature illustrating this paradigm. See Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991). He notes that

"the famous banquet at which Banquo's ghost appears only acquires real significance because of the rules it breaks" (p. 49). Jeanneret quips, "Perhaps it [ritualistic table etiquette] needed someone with Shakespeare's power to dare to overthrow the rules in such a way" (p. 49).

¹¹Critical opinion is divided on the issue of Williamson's delivery. See *Shakespeare on Television: An Anthology of Essays and Reviews*, ed. J. C. Bulman and H. R. Coursen (Hanover: Univ. Presses of New England, 1988). H. R. Coursen criticizes Williamson's oscillating voice in the BBC production, describing it as varying "from a timorous tadpole of a whisper to a bullfrog croak as if he had contacted croup in the murky air of the studio" (qtd. in Bulman and Coursen, p. 298). However, this equivocation is consistent with one of Shakespeare's primary themes in the play and a logical representation of the spiritual confusion Macbeth's appetite causes. I agree with Michael Mullin that the actor "seems to be actually experiencing the struggles that the words convey" (qtd. in Bulman and Coursen, p. 298).

¹²Later, Lady Macduff wears a similar cord and medallions, but on her layered and flowing gown they are not sexually suggestive. Surely this contrast between Lady Macbeth and Lady Macduff is intentional.

¹³See Hugh Latimer, "The First Sermon Preached Before King Edward [VI], March 8, 1549," *Sermons* (London: J. M. Dent, 1906), p. 80.

¹⁴The word *equivocator* resonates throughout the Porter scene, reminding us of Macbeth as the cardinal equivocator in this play. He is the agent of disorder and confusion, the creator of his own personal hell. The *Oxford English Dictionary* discusses *equivocation* as linked with *confusion*, which the OED defines as an outgrowth of perdition or evil itself. All of these meanings are consistent with the connotations of *weird* (derived from the Old English *wyrd*) and are associated with *weyward* and *fate* in the most negative sense. We can see, then, the effective convergence of associations among some of the key words in Shakespeare's play. The BBC *Macbeth* capitalizes on these associations through visual representations of the connections. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, CD-ROM. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), s. v. *equivocator*, *confusion*, *perdition*, *weird*.

¹⁵See Michèle Willems, "Verbal-Visual, Verbal-Pictorial or Textual-Televisual? Reflections on the BBC Shakespeare Series," in *Shakespeare and the Moving Image: The Plays on Film and Television*, ed. Anthony Davies and Stanley Wells (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 69-85. Willems discusses the stylized setting of Gold's *Macbeth*, observing that the production must complement the scale of television (see especially pp. 80-81). The stylized gate is both simple and suggestive, a fine example of the concept Willems discusses although she does not mention the gate itself.

Mimesis and Catharsis in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* by D. Douglas Waters

Shakespeare's presentation of Coriolanus as a tragic figure reveals a mixture of such traits as magnanimity, integrity, pride, anger, hatred, mercy, and revenge. For twentieth century critics his tragic character has remained controversial. As early as 1710, Charles Gildon mentioned Coriolanus' pride, which he did not condemn as many later critics since A. C. Bradley have.¹ In the British Academy lecture on *Coriolanus* in 1912, Bradley, who stated incidentally that Coriolanus "is the proudest man in Shakespeare" but "seems to be unaware of his pride,"² asserted "that the hero's faults are repellent and chill our sympathy."³ Willard Farnham, who also grants that "*Coriolanus* can be admirable as well as detestable,"⁴ judges that "*Coriolanus* is a magnificent failure in which Shakespeare seems to have brought his tragic inspiration to an end by taking tragedy into an area of paradox beyond the effective reach of merely human pity."⁵

Though there are critics during the 1950's, 1960's, and 1970's who, as I will indicate later, read the play as a tragedy, the majority of critics in the 1990's and 1980's emphasize aspects of *Coriolanus* other than tragedy. Zvi Jagendorf, for example, asserts that "In *Coriolanus* the thematics of politics overshadow those of tragedy."⁶ James Holstun assumes that the debate about "whether or not Coriolanus is a sympathetic tragic figure is beside the point."⁷ He further asserts "his character is not presented as an object of Aristotelian pity (he is not 'a man suffering undeservedly') nor of Aristotelian fear (he is not 'a man like ourselves')."⁸

In the following pages I intend to continue the debate by accepting magnanimity (or greatness of soul) in the tradition of Aristotle as the tragic hero's main virtue⁹ and by focusing on Shakespeare's adaptation of Aristotle's *mimesis* as imitation or artistic representation on a stage and catharsis as our clarification of human experience—concepts which I have defined in my *Christian Settings in Shakespeare's Tragedies*.¹⁰ *Mimesis* as imitation or artistic representation of a tragic hero's character begets catharsis as our intellectual, moral, and emotional clarification for his or her tragic downfall.

But before I turn to the play and explore this concept I must first mention two contrary views of catharsis: the traditional

concept of catharsis as purgation and the less dominant view of catharsis as social and/or psychological reconciliation, views which I have elsewhere rejected.¹¹ The reason I mention them here is that at least one of them has been alluded to or discussed by two critics on *Coriolanus*. Norman Rabkin, for example, in "*Coriolanus: The Tragedy of Politics*," names, but does not define, catharsis in the following cryptic statement: "Coriolanus brings down with him all hope of a society that embodies his vision; no catharsis is possible."¹² If he means the traditional view of catharsis as purgation of our pity and fear or the less dominant view of catharsis as psychological and social reconciliation, then I agree with Rabkin that there is neither kind of catharsis in *Coriolanus*. But catharsis as clarification is another matter, as I will attempt to demonstrate shortly. Maurice Hunt's article, "Shakespeare's Tragic Homeopathy," gives an imaginative treatment of a few details in the catastrophe of the tragedy. His treatment of sixteenth and seventeenth century historical background is good. He discusses the classical "homeopathic idea that 'likes are cured by likes'—that diseases are purged by doses of compounds resembling the diseases themselves"¹³ and uses, in relation to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, the term *homeopathy* interchangeably with the terms *purgation* and *catharsis*.

But Hunt focuses not on the tragic hero but Aufidius:

A definite instance of this complete purgation [in the writings of Minturno] occurs in *Coriolanus* when the antagonist Aufidius' expressed rage attending his final accusation and killing of Coriolanus drives out his previous wrathful jealousy concerning the Roman's military prowess.¹⁴

Granted, this insight adds intellectual depth to Aufidius' words "my rage is gone, / And I am struck with sorrow" (V. vi. 153), but his following cryptic statement, which is all he writes that relates to the central figure of the tragedy, is unconvincing because Hunt does not support it with any evidence: "Coriolanus's demise depends primarily upon a character flaw rendered intelligible by the homeopathic principle informing the play's catharsis."¹⁵ The fact that Hunt does not support this generalization might suggest he intended to write about it later. Yet I suspect that this failure indicates the weakness of the homeopathic principle, which is not enlightening for a study of Coriolanus' character while, I suggest, catharsis as clarification is more rewarding.

Catharsis, as our intellectual, moral, and emotional clarification, reinforces our painful awareness that Coriolanus is de-

The Upstart Crow

stroyed by the two following forces equally working together: the tragic situations represented by the tribunes and Aufidius and the hero's tragic flaw of anger.¹⁶ One element of catharsis as clarification is our intellectual understanding of the difference between Coriolanus as a magnanimous man of honor and integrity and his enemies—the tribunes and Aufidius. The essential difference is that his enemies have no internal conflicts while he has internal conflicts between honor and dishonor on almost every significant occasion: on asking for the plebeians' voices and votes, on not "speaking them fair" after they retract their votes, on trying to tell the people he is sorry at the trial, on trying to deny his nature and thus trying to sack Rome, on trying to explain to the Volscians why he was still one of them in the last scene, and on trying here also to outface his devious rival. Our understanding of Coriolanus' conflicts tends to make us, on the whole, much more interested in and sympathetic toward him than his opponents who are much more realistic and pragmatic in the political forum. By contrast to the high-minded and honorable Coriolanus, the tribunes are shrewd, sagacious, devious, treacherous, and power-hungry demagogues. Unlike Aufidius, the tribunes are non-heroic, but like him they have no conflicts, knowing what they want and doing whatever is necessary, in any underhanded way, to accomplish their political goals.

On the one hand, for example, the tribunes shame the common people for not telling Coriolanus, as they "were lesson'd" (II. iii. 177),¹⁷ that he must "Translate his malice towards" the citizens "into love" (II. iii. 189). On the other hand, the tribunes instruct the plebeians to "lay a fault" on the tribunes themselves by telling the patricians that Brutus and Sicinius insisted that the plebeians "must / cast" their "election on" Coriolanus (II. iii. 227-28). Shakespeare's *mimesis* emphasizes their effectiveness as professional rivals throughout acts two and three. The tribunes, for example, also chide the plebeians for not "putting him to rage" and not taking "advantage of his choler" (II. iii. 197-98). Knowing their man, the tribunes also scheme, just before the trial scene, as follows:

Put him to choler straight, . . .
 Being once chaf'd, he cannot
 Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks
 What's in his heart, and that is there which looks
 With us to break his neck.

(III. iii. 25-30)

Like the tribunes, Aufidius becomes treacherous shortly after

Coriolanus with deep-seated revenge joins him at Antium.¹⁸ The Volscian general plans to destroy Coriolanus whether he sacks or spares Rome. On one occasion, for example, while Aufidius still believes Coriolanus might conquer Rome, he plans to accuse and dispose of him in the following apostrophe:

When, Caius, Rome is thine,
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.
(IV. vii. 56-57)

And immediately upon Coriolanus' sparing Rome, Aufidius—true to his scheming nature which we have been aware of since their first encounter in act one—again vows to destroy Coriolanus in any underhanded way he can.

[*Aside*] I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honor
At difference in thee. Out of that I'll work
Myself a former fortune.
(V. iii. 200-02)

So, part of our catharsis as intellectual clarification is the understanding that Coriolanus tries to remain a man of honor but fails while his enemies, the tribunes and Aufidius both by policy and action, are concerned only with protecting their personal power. And they succeed. Such motivation is very convincing in Shakespeare's *mimesis*.

A second part of our catharsis as clarification involves moral clarification, our recognition that Coriolanus' tragic flaw of anger not only helps initiate but also helps complete his tragic downfall.¹⁹ In III. i and iii his friends and advisors plead with him in vain to "Be calm, be calm" (III. i. 37, cf. also 57, 63, 74); and Menenius cautions, "Nay, temperately; your promise" (III. iii. 67) and asks, "Is this the promise that you made your mother?" (III. iii. 86). Yet on both occasions Coriolanus becomes angry and speaks his heart-felt resentment of the plebeians freely. On the first occasion he storms out in excessive anger as follows:

How? no more?
As for my country I have shed my blood,
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
Coin words till their decay against those measles
[*catering to the plebeians*]
Which we disdain should tetter us, yet sought
The very way to catch them.
(III. i. 75-80)

Moreover, on the second occasion (that of his trial)—after trying to control his anger and saying he is “content,” in the words of Sicinius, “To suffer lawful censure for such faults / As shall be prov’d upon” him (III. iii. 46-47)—Coriolanus utters the following fiery exclamations:

The fires i’ the lowest hell fold in the people!
 Call me their traitor, thou injurious tribune!
 (III. iii. 68-69)

The *mimesis* of III. i and iii produces catharsis as our moral clarification, our clear-eyed recognition that Coriolanus helps “mar his fortune” and thus deserves to lose the consulship partially because of failure to control his anger and partially because of the tragic situation represented by the tribunes’ role.

A third part of catharsis is our emotional clarification of pity for Coriolanus in the scenes where he suffers more than he deserves: the crucial embassy scene and the final scene of the play. We experience clarification of pity for him because he does not deserve to be called a traitor, an absurd charge because he is Rome’s protector; he does not deserve the tribunes’ decision to arrest him, an assault far less lawful than some critics have asserted. Their first attempt is quelled in Shakespeare’s *mimesis* in that the patricians protect him from the tribune-incensed mob, which increases our sympathy for Coriolanus.

Another instance of catharsis as our emotional clarification of pity occurs when the tribunes announce their death sentence which Coriolanus does not deserve. His magnanimity or greatness of soul is seen when he draws out his sword magnificently and challenges the aediles and plebeians, filling us with admiration touched with pity:

... No, I’ll die here.
 There’s some among you have beheld me fighting;
 Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.
 (III. i. 222-24)

On the second occasion where they again call him traitor and where his excessive anger leads him to speak honorably but too bluntly, we realize he is a person like ourselves—neither completely good nor completely evil (but certainly a man of greater worth and respect than any of his opponents)—and thus we fear for his safety when he storms out as follows:

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,

Mimesis and Catharsis in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*

Vagabond exile, fleeing, pent to linger
 But with a grain a day, I would not buy
 Their mercy at the price of one fair word,
 Nor check my courage for what they can give,
 To have't with saying "Good morrow."

(III. iii. 88-93)

When we observe his banishment, which he does not deserve, our admiration is again touched with pity as he rises magnificently to the occasion and again sets his honorable but tragic record straight as follows:

You common cry of curs, whose breath I hate
 As reek a' th' rotten fens, whose loves I prize
 As the dead carcasses of unburied men
 That do corrupt my air—I banish you!

(III. iii. 120-23)

The *mimesis* of Aufidius' plan to destroy Coriolanus, regardless of whichever way the Roman reacts, effects a catharsis as our intellectual, moral, and emotional clarification and suggests that Coriolanus' tragic error is his joining the Volsces against Rome in that this tragic act seals his doom: If he destroys his native city, he will be killed at the expense of dishonor to his family and Rome; and if he spares his family and Rome—as his conflict in fact leads him to do—he will still be killed by Aufidius and his fellow conspirators at the expense of dishonor to the Volscians.

The embassy scene, which is the only occasion on which Coriolanus' magnanimity or greatness of soul helps him control his anger, stresses the tragic irony of the situation, the hero being doomed whether he sacks or spares Rome. Because Coriolanus learns too late that he cannot kill his family—wife, mother, and son—his love and pity for them increase our catharsis as do our intellectual and emotional clarification of pity and fear for him in his following recognition:

[Coriolanus] holds her by the hand, silent.

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

(V. iii. 182-89)

The *mimesis* in the final catastrophe again stresses tragic irony and only partly the hero's tragic flaw of anger. Just as Hamlet walks into the trap of the poisoned sword and the poisoned cup in Elsinore, Coriolanus walks into Aufidius' trap of conspiracy in Corioles, the scheming Volscian leader knowing that he needs only to make his magnanimous enemy angry so as to create a pretext for violent retaliation. Aufidius' charge—"tell the traitor, in the highest degree / He hath abus'd your powers" (V. vi. 84-85)—strikes home. At Aufidius' "traitor, Martius!" Coriolanus, like the powerless King Lear before his unjust daughters in Gloucester's castle, calls on a higher justicer: "Hear'st thou, Mars?" (V. vi. 99). Sensing Aufidius' fear and futilely appealing to the Volscian lords, Coriolanus angrily confronts his rival and the lords with the following words:

Measureless liar, thou hast made my heart
Too great for what contains it. "Boy"? O slave!
Pardon me, lords, 'tis the first time that ever
I was forc'd to scold.

(V. vi. 102-05)

And again he challenges all of them:

Cut me to pieces, Volsces, men and lads
Stain all your edges on me. "Boy," false hound!
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I
[Flutter'd] your Volscians in Corioles.
Alone I did it. "Boy"!

(V. vi. 111-16)

Again wishing for the fighting chance he does not have, Coriolanus intuits Aufidius' fear as follows:

. . . O that I had him,
With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,
To use my lawful sword!

(V. vi. 127-29)

These outbursts of Coriolanus' anger do not by themselves cause the final catastrophe; they only partially cause it, for Aufidius' conspiracy would have been enough to bring on that catastrophe whether or not the hero remained silent (as in Plutarch) or was permitted to speak. So Paul A. Jorgensen's idea that "'gentle words' might have saved his life" is untrue,²⁰ since Coriolanus once again is doomed the instant he joins Aufidius against Rome. Yet these angry outbursts help bring on his death by giving his

devious rival the pretext he needs for having his henchmen aid him in the murder. Thus, the tragic *mimesis* as imitation of human nature or artistic representation of Coriolanus' magnanimity and anger completes catharsis as the intellectual, moral, and emotional clarification of pity and fear in the audience for the tragic hero's downfall and destruction: Intellectually we know that the magnanimous Coriolanus as warrior is neither "boy" nor "braggart": "like an eagle in a dove-cote," he indeed did "[Flutter]" Aufidius' "Volscians in Corioles." He is not Bradley's "overgrown boy." Morally, we know that he did dishonor his agreement with Aufidius—so he was a traitor to the Volscians and deserves some punishment, but hardly the foregone dilemma of death either way and the humiliating death by conspiracy. Therefore, emotionally we feel pity for Coriolanus in that—though he deserves part of his suffering—he gets more than he merits. He does not deserve the treachery and double-dealing on the part of Aufidius in acts four and five and the tribunes in acts two and three. Thus, catharsis as emotional clarification includes pity and fear for Coriolanus as we watch him fail while his opponents who are lesser men succeed at his expense.

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Notes

¹See "The Argument of *Coriolanus*," in David Wheeler, ed. *Coriolanus: Critical Essays* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 7-10, esp. p. 7. Wheeler has an up-to-date, informative introduction to the play and its criticism (mainly balanced selections from early and later approaches) reprinted in his edition, pp. xv-xxxii; for *Coriolanus* as mainly a man of pride, see Henry N. Hudson, Introduction, *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Coriolanus* (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1881), 3-35, esp. p. 24; William J. Rolfe, Introduction, *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Coriolanus*, 1881 (New York: American Book Co., 1909), 9-42, esp. pp. 36-37; and Philip Brockbank, Introduction, *Arden Coriolanus* (London: Methuen & Co., 1976), 1-89, esp. p. 37.

Some of my basic research on Shakespeare's tragedies, including *Coriolanus*, was made possible by two research grants—one in 1986 and one in 1987—from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. For that generous support I wish to thank Dr. Ronald N. Satz, Vice Chancellor of the University. Since my retirement in June 1998, I have received continuous moral and material support from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire English Department. For such aid I wish to thank particularly the former Chair, Dr. Bernard Duyfhuizen, now Assistant Dean of Arts and Sciences, and the present Chair, Dr. Martin Wood, for helping bear the cost of research expenses on this article.

²"*Coriolanus*," British Academy Lecture, rptd. in *A Miscellany* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), 73-104, esp. p. 88.

³Bradley, p. 74.

⁴(Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1963), 207-64, esp. p. 219.

⁵Farnham, p. 64.

⁶"*Coriolanus*: Body Politic and Private Parts," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41 (1990), 455-69, esp. p. 468; see also Clifford Chalmers Huffman, "*Coriolanus*" in *Context* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 1971), which gives a fine historical treatment of political theory and "mixed government" (pp. 33-34) and contends that Shakespeare "would necessarily oppose political innovation" (p. 222); Anne Barton, in "Livy, Machiavelli, and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*," *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1985), 115-29, argues that the dramatist was favorable to political change and innovation as were Livy and Machiavelli and rejects Huffman's view of "*Coriolanus* as Shakespeare's apology for Jacobean absolutism" (p. 128); and Bertolt Brecht, in his "Study of the First Scene of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*" in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. and ed. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1985), 252-65, stresses that Shakespeare supposedly has more sympathy for the plebeians than for Coriolanus and the patricians; for psychoanalytic approaches, see Janet Adelman's "Escaping the Matrix: The Construction of Masculinity in *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*," 1992, rptd. in Susanne L. Wofford, ed. *Shakespeare's Late Tragedies: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 134-67; Madelon Sprengnether's *Annihilating Intimacy in Coriolanus* (1986) and Karen Aubrey's "Shifting Masks, Roles, and Satiric Personae: Suggestions for Exploring the Edge of Genre in *Coriolanus*" (1994), both rptd. in Wheeler, 179-202 and 299-338 respectively.

⁷"Tragic Superfluity in *Coriolanus*," *ELH*, 50 (1983), 485-507, esp. p. 497. For reviews of the debate about tragedy, see W. Hutchings' "'Beast or God': The *Coriolanus* Controversy," *Critical Quarterly*, 24 (1982), 35-50 and Simon A. Barker's "Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: Texts and Histories" in *Assays: Critical Approaches to Medieval and Renaissance Texts*, 4 (1987), 109-28.

⁸Holstun, p. 497. For those who stress something other than tragedy in *Coriolanus*, see Stanley Cavel, "'Who does the wolf love?': *Coriolanus* and Interpretations of Politics," in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, ed. Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (New York: Methuen & Co., 1985), 245-72, esp. p. 245 and Dennis Bathory, "'With Himself at War': Shakespeare's Roman Hero and the Republican Tradition" in *Shakespeare's Political Pageant: Essays in Literature and Politics*, ed. Joseph Alulis and Vickie Sullivan (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 1996), 237-61, esp. 255-56.

⁹On magnanimity in *Coriolanus*, see Rodney Poisson's "Coriolanus as Aristotle's Magnanimous Man," in *Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare*, ed. W. F. McNeir and T. N. Greenfield (Eugene: Univ. of Oregon Press, 1966), 210-24, esp. p. 224; Wilbur Sanders' "'An Impossible Person': Caius Martius Coriolanus," in *Shakespeare's Magnanimity: Four Tragic Heroes, Their Friends and Families* by Wilbur Sanders and Howard Jacobson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), 136-87, esp. p. 146; and Roy W. Battenhouse's "The Reshaped Meaning of *Coriolanus*," in *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), 303-74. Arguing that Coriolanus' Greek, "self-centered ethic" is ultimately pride (one of the seven deadly sins), pp. 318, 320, 373, and 372, Battenhouse concedes that no character in Shakespeare's tragedy completely manifests Christian magnanimity, to which I can agree—see my section on Spenser's Prince Arthur as Christian magnanimity in *Duessa as Theological Satire* (Columbia, MO: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1970), pp. 83-92. My disagreement with Battenhouse in the above text is based on the assumption that Coriolanus' magnanimity is a virtue (not a vice) and his tragic flaw is the irascible passion of anger. The idea that Coriolanus' virtue is also his vice—which many critics since Farnham are fond of repeating—is, I think, fallacious.

¹⁰See Chapter 2: "Mimesis, Shakespeare the Dramatist, and His Texts," 31-58 and Chapter 4: "Catharsis as Clarification," 79-118 (Cranbury, NJ: Associated Univ. Presses, 1994).

¹¹See Waters, *Christian Settings in Shakespeare's Tragedies*, pp. 79-88.

¹²*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 17 (1966), 195-212, esp. p. 211.

¹³In *Shakespeare: Text, Subtext, and Context*, ed. Ronald Dotterer (Selingsgrove, PA: Susquehanna Univ. Press, 1989), 77-84, esp. 77-79.

¹⁴Hunt, pp. 81-82.

¹⁵Hunt, p. 83.

¹⁶Most critics however think he destroys himself mainly through pride: see Farnham, p. 207; Irving Ribner, "The Tragedy of *Coriolanus*," *English Studies*, 37 (1953), 1-9, esp. p. 6; and Brockbank, p. 33. For critics who reject pride as dominant, see John Dover Wilson, p. xxvii, and Sanders, p. 149; and for anger as *Coriolanus*' tragic weakness, see John Dover Wilson, p. xxvii, and I. R. Browning, in "Coriolanus: Boy of Tears," *Essays in Criticism*, 5 (1955), 18-31, esp. p. 22.

¹⁷This and all my other quotations are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974).

¹⁸On Shakespeare's curious handling of erotic imagery in the love-hate relationship between the two rival warriors, see Robert J. Stoller, in "Shakespearean Tragedy: *Coriolanus*," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 35 (1966), 263-74, rptd. in M. D. Faber, ed. *The Design Within: Psychoanalytic Approaches to Shakespeare* (New York: Science House, 1970), 329-39, which stresses imagery of phalluses and castration in relation to the son and mother (p. 330 in Faber) and *Coriolanus*' hatred of his mother leading to his "indirect expression of homosexual needs" (p. 335) and which "causes him to submit to Aufidius for their joint annihilation" (p. 336); see also Madelon Sprengnether (1986) in Wheeler, pp. 179-202, which elaborates on Stoller's ideas—stressing the hero's anxiety over femininity (p. 198, n. 6 in Wheeler).

¹⁹On the main cause of the tragedy, see H. J. Oliver, "Coriolanus as a Tragic Hero," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 10 (1959), 53-60, who thinks it is the unworthy Roman environment (p. 57); Kenneth Muir, in *Shakespeare's Tragic Sequence* (London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1972), emphasizes *Coriolanus*' education (p. 180); Reuben A. Brower, in *Hero and Saint: Shakespeare and the Graeco-Roman Heroic Tradition* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), identifies it as aloneness (p. 361 and p. 373); and F. H. Rouda, in "Coriolanus: A Tragedy of Youth," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 12 (1961), pp. 103-06, believes "*Coriolanus* is . . . a tragedy of youth" (p. 103), a youth who is a chronic misapprehender of reality and an inexperienced idealist unable to tolerate people who lie and cheat.

²⁰"Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*: Elizabethan Soldier," *PMLA*, 64 (1949), 221-35, rptd. in Wheeler, 47-66, esp. p. 61.

Shakespeare's Musical Sonnets: Numbers 8, 128, and Pythagoras by Fred Blick

I. Introduction

In the 1609 Quarto of *Shakespeare's Sonnets* there are only two, numbered 8 and 128, which have music as a major theme. This article will explore, for the first time, the relevance and inter-dependence of their numbers in the sequence, as related to the musical imagery which they deploy in seeking to persuade their respective addressees. Number 8 urges a Young Man to marry and to procreate. Number 128 urges a woman, who is playing the virginal, to kiss the poet. The underlying symbolism of the numbers of these sonnets will be considered.

In 1984 René Graziani¹, while examining principally sonnets 12, 60, and 126, found in sonnet 8 "an ingenious play on musical imagery evoked by the number eight denoting the octave which was then called an eighth." This cursory finding has not been followed up as far as the writer is aware. Katherine Duncan-Jones has since given prominence to the theory of a numerology for the sonnets in her Introduction and Notes for the 1997 Arden edition of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, but she does not mention sonnet 8 in this respect.² Helen Vendler made a very perceptive analysis of sonnet 8 in *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* which strengthens this sonnet's association with the octave and the number 8, but she too omits specific reference to such an association.³

Because his summary of sonnet 8 is too condensed to have much significance, Graziani's observation of the numeric/musical relationship of sonnet 8 needs further explanation in order for it to be completely convincing. On the evidence of what appears to have been a cursory examination he found sonnet 8 to be a less conclusive instance of number and theme relationship than sonnets 12 ("the clock"), 60 ("minutes") and 126 (representing two grand climacterics of 63, that of the poet and that of the youth, and a verse form of 12/6 in the 12 lines comprising 6 rhyming couplets). However, as will be seen, a close examination of sonnet 8 leads to a conclusive finding that the poet placed this sonnet under its number deliberately and that he took inspiration from the musical associations of the number.

II. Sonnet 8

All Shakespeare's sonnets exhibit the rhyming concord of unison in the rhyme scheme of a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g, or minor variations thereof, except 126 which has 12 lines in six couplets (so that the number invites being read as 12/6). However, as explained below, sonnet 8 exploits to an extraordinary degree, rhyming concord of unison combined with musical associations which suggest the octave:

- (a) by internal rhymes or near rhymes of musical words and by repetitions of words of musical significance, most prominently in the first two lines, but also featured subsequently. These are:
- (i) the doubled use of the words "musick to heare" reversed as "hear'st thou musick," a striking concord in chiasmus (l. 1).
 - (ii) the chimes of "Sweets with sweets" and "joy . . . in joy" (l. 2), "each in each" (l. 10) and, more distantly, "receav'st" (repeated in ll. 3 and 4) and "sweetly" with "sweet" (in ll. 7 and 9).
 - (iii) as Helen Vendler has pointed out (79), the flurry of puns on harmonic "unison," a word which is the graphic anagram of "unions" i.e. "tuned," "unions," "one string," "all in one," "one pleasing note," "seeming one,"
 - (iv) the monadic puns on single and sing ("singleness", "do sing," "song," "sings," "single."
- (b) by the use of the words "true concord" as perfect concord (line 5),
- (c) by the visual as well as musical rhyme of "sounds" (printed in the 1609 Quarto, as was normal in Elizabethan times, as "founds") with "confounds" (ll. 5 and 7).

Sonnet 8 reads, in the text of the 1609 Quarto, as follows:

8

Musick to heare, why hear'st thou musick sadly,
 Sweets with sweets warre not, ioy delights in ioy:
 Why lov'st thou that which thou receavst not gladly,
 Or else receav'st with pleasure thine annoy?
 If the true concord of well tuned sounds,
 By unions married do offend thine eare,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singleness the parts that thou should'st beare:

Marke how one string sweet husband to an other,
 Strikes each in each by mutuall ordering;
 Resembling sier, and child, and happy mother,
 Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
 Whose speechlesse song being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee thou single wilt prove none.

III. The Historical Associations of the Musical Octave and the Number 8

Humanity has an intuitive sense of the octave which must be as old as song itself. The register of adult male voices is, on average, about an octave below that of adult females. A man and a woman singing together would have discovered, even in primitive times, the pleasing sound of doubled "parts" (l. 8) in melody ringing out at an octave's remove.

In the whole note scale (i.e. excluding semi-tones) there are seven notes followed by the eighth, the octave note. This is why the Elizabethans, and in particular Thomas Morley, in his *A Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke* of 1597, called the octave interval the "Eight" or "Eighth."

The number "8" of this sonnet suggests the musical octave because of the linguistic association of the "Eight" with the word "octave" (derived from the Latin *octavus* = eight). The octave or "eight" in turn suggested to Shakespeare not only musical "concord" and unison but also the "concord" of a happy pair united in wedlock with their resultant increase by procreation. These ideas are derived by analogy from man's pleasing experience of the "concord" of the sound of the musical octave or "Eight."

The octave was also called a "diapason" (see OED "octave"). The Latin "diapason" means "the whole octave" and is derived from the Greek "diapason" which in turn means "through all." The crucial point made in the sonnet is that a "concord," "union" or unison, the perfect example of which is the sound of octave unison, cannot be made by "singlenesse." The significance of this is, as we shall see, founded on Pythagorean theory of music and number.

That the octave was in fact called an "Eight" in Shakespeare's time is confirmed by the definition of "unison" in OED, (A. sb. 1. b), as illustrated by the historical quotation,

1626 Bacon, *Sylva*, "The Diapason or Eight in Music is the sweetest Concord: insomuch as it is in effect an Unison."

This wording accords closely with the sonnet's lines

If the true concord of well tuned sounds,
By unions married do offend thine eare,
They do but sweetly chide thee . . .

(Sonnet 8, 5-7)

The fact that a "concord" of sounds "by unions married" is sounded "sweetly," is relied upon in the sonnet as an argument in favour of marriage. "Concord," as perceived in the sonnet's combination of "sweet husband," "happy mother," and "child," is what the Young Man is invited to "Marke." Furthermore, the reference to "unions" in the context of this sonnet clearly suggests "unison" (and not merely because it is an anagram of "unions"). A "concord" was a unison or octave, as the quotation from Bacon above illustrates.⁴

Whilst reminding the reader of man's intuitive sense of the octave, Shakespeare seems conscious of Pythagoras or of the Pythagoreans (whom he mentions three times in his plays, specifically in connection with the transmigration of souls).⁵ Pythagoras or his School (circa 530 B.C. and later) developed the doctrine that all things are numbers or that they imitate or represent numbers, the whole heaven forming a musical scale and number. This arose out of the greatest discovery attributed to him which is the dependence of the musical intervals on certain arithmetical ratios of lengths of strings at the same tension. A ratio of 2:1 (or 1:2) was found in the phenomenon that upon plucking a string of given length at a given tension, a musical note is heard which is precisely one octave lower than that which is heard when plucking a string of one half of that length at the same tension.⁶ This led quickly to the general Pythagorean philosophy of numbers ("all things are numbers") and to the doctrines of the "harmony of the spheres" and the "harmony of the soul" which are referred to by Shakespeare clearly and memorably in V. i. 58-65 and 83-88 of *The Merchant of Venice* (as printed in the First Quarto of 1600):

sit Iessica, looke how the patterns of heaven
is thicke inlayed with pattens of bright gold,
there's not the smallest orbe which thou beholdst
but in his motion like an Angell sings,
still quiring to the young eyde Cherubins;
such harmonie is in immortall soules,
but whilst this muddy vesture of decay
dooth grosly close it in, we cannot heare it:

.....

The man that has no musicke in himselfe,
 Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
 Is fit for treasons, stratagemes, and spoyles,
 The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
 And his affections darke as Erobus,
 Let no such man be trusted: marke the musicke.

Note here, Shakespeare's refers to a man who has "no musicke in himself" and who is "not moved with concord of sweet sounds," as one who has characteristics and "motions of his spirit" (soul) which are sinister and far from the sweet concept of the "true concord" referred to in sonnet 8 (5). It is in IV. i. 131 of this play that Shakespeare mentions Pythagoras by name in connection with the transmigration of souls. Pythagoreans held the doctrine that the soul is itself a "harmonia," considered as a system of parts that might be related in consonance or discord and which could survive the dissolution of any particular bodily instrument, just as a musical scale is not destroyed when a lyre is broken. Such system could organise a series of bodies, consistently with transmigration.⁶

The discovery, attributed to Pythagoras, of the 2:1 ratio in the lengths of strings held at the same tension to produce notes an octave apart was also applied to musical pipes and to the construction of organ pipes. By the sixteenth century, organ pipes of 8 feet, 16 feet and 32 feet were in existence to produce notes at perfect octave intervals on the 2:1 ratio principle, the longer pipe producing the lower note.⁷

Octave notes on western musical instruments have always been tuned in perfect unison. However, it is a law of nature which was known to the ancient Greeks, that the twelve semitones of the western scale, based on octaves, are more or less discordant. Their acceptable tuning requires an imperfect compromise, hence the various "temperaments," developed both before and after Shakespeare's time to alleviate the phenomenon of unpleasant "wolf" notes, particularly in organs, when playing polyphonic music. These unacceptable discords are accentuated by uncompromising tuning, through non-octave intervals such as the perfect thirds or fifths. The natural inconsistency between the perfect octave and the twelve semitones, which is exposed by such uncompromising tuning through fifths, over a span of seven octaves, is called the "Pythagorean comma." The same problem, alleviated by compromises in tuning, later called "mean tuning," existed also for the strings of fretted instruments, such as the lute. All this was known to Shakespeare's musical contemporary, Thomas Morley, and the two may well have been friends who

discussed musical theory.

IV. The Theme of the Musical Octave in Sonnet 8

According to sonnet 8 the Young Man needs counsel because of his discomfort with music. His soul does not appear to be in harmony nor does he respond normally to musical concord (1-8). As the sonnet invokes the pleasing "concord of well tuned sounds" of the perfect octave or "eight" which, paradoxically, offends him, it is an appropriate occasion upon which to remind him of the lesson to be learnt from an example of octave concord in practical and family terms, both with the sound of strings as well as—by analogy in the sonnet—with song,

Marke how one string sweet husband to an other,
Strikes each in each by mutuall ordering;
Resembling sier, and child, and happy mother,
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechelesse song being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee thou single wilt prove none.

(Sonnet 8, 9-14)

Most clearly, the song of "many, seeming one," "Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing," which the poet likens to the consonance of strings, here refers to the song of husband ("sier"), mother and child singing in octave unison. Such a family is very unlikely, due to sex and age, to be able to sing on one note at one pitch in unison ("by unions married"). The "one pleasing note" would, of necessity, be found in octave unison, the "husband" or "sier" being the "one," in the 1:2 Pythagorean octave ratio of singers singing the same note, and he at a pitch which is an octave lower than the other two, i.e. magadizing.⁸

Commentators have confirmed that, by the reference to strings in line 9, lute tuning is invoked. Certainly, the lute was, next to the viol, the most popular stringed musical instrument in Shakespeare's time for private music making. Furthermore, the sonnet refers to the "mutual ordering" of strings (vibrating together in sympathy as a result of one string being struck in l. 10). It is pertinent that the tuning of the lute in England, up to about 1600 and the time of Dowland's later innovations, involved two of the usually six sets of double strings (each set tuned in unison) being tuned octaves apart—G c f a d' g' or A d g b e' a'.⁹ Naylor (as cited by Hyder Rollins)¹⁰ wrote "the gamut G had . . . a pair of strings, one of which being plucked would cause the other to sound by resonance . . . and the pair, in their turn, would make the

little 'g' two octaves higher, sound with them." It is relevant that the little "g" was a single string, a "minikin" (also a "female" according to the OED).

It was, perhaps, as a consequence of Pythagoras' discovery of the numbers behind the science of musical intervals, that he or his school was also credited with the idea (and the linguistic paradox) that "one is no number," i.e. that what we call "one" is, in fact, simply a starting point, a Monad, a singleness standing alone and not in a number. It is relevant, when considering whether Shakespeare's was cognizant of Pythagorean number theory, which was itself derived from music, that the first sonnet in his sequence commencing, "From fairest creatures we desire increase" was not numbered in the 1609 Quarto, yet the next sonnet was numbered 2. A perusal of *An English Garner, Elizabethan Sonnets* does not reveal any other sequence of numbered sonnets where the first sonnet is not numbered but where the following sonnet is numbered 2. Shakespeare's omission of the number 1 appears to be both an unique and deliberate gesture for reasons which follow.

The negative aspect of "singleness," first expressed in lines 7 and 8, is expressed in line 14 of sonnet 8 as "thou single wilt prove none" and later in Sonnet 136, line 8 as: "Among a number one is reckon'd none." The statement, "thou single wilt prove none" (i.e. if you have no wife nor a resultant child, your "line" of life will die out) is relevant to the musical metaphor. A single string cannot produce sympathetic resonance, concord, unison or consonance in the absence of another string which could be excited acoustically by its vibrations (or be struck simultaneously) as on the lute.

There can be no doubt that, in playing on the theme of the harmony of family "concord," Shakespeare had seen in the "Eight" a metaphor for such concord and that he had in mind the "unions" or perfect unison of the octave. While he shows no sign of having practical technical expertise in music, he was most accurately aware of its terminology, as E. W. Naylor demonstrated in his *Shakespeare And Music*, and, apparently, he understood music's Pythagorean foundations. In any event, for intuitive reasons already mentioned, one of the first aspects of music making which strikes the eye and ear of an amateur is the octave.

V. Two More Elizabethan Musical Sonnets Numbered 8

Hitherto, it has escaped critical notice that Shakespeare was not alone among Elizabethan sonneteers in exploiting the musical

symbolism of the number "Eight." In 1594 William Percy's sequence of twenty sonnets under the title *Coelia* was printed by Adam Islip for "W. P." The initials probably refer to William Ponsonby, the publisher of Spenser's *Amoretti* in 1595, or possibly to William Percy himself. Percy was a son of the Earl of Northumberland and a college friend of the prolific sonneteer Barnaby Barnes. Barnes dedicated his *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* to Percy in 1593. Percy's eighth sonnet reads:

VIII

Strike up, my Lute! and ease my heavy cares,
 The only solace to my Passions:
 Impart unto the airs, thy pleasing airs!
 More sweet than heavenly consolations.
 Rehearse the songs of forlorn amor'us
 Driven to despair by dames tyrannical!
 Of ALPHEUS' loss, of woes of TROILUS,
 Of ROWLAND'S rage, of IPHIS' funeral!
 Ay me! what warbles yields mine instrument!
 The Basses shriek as though they were amiss!
 The means, no means, too sad the merriment!
 No, no! the music good, but thus it is
 I loath both Means, merriment, Diapasons;
 So She and I may be but Unisons.

In the expressions "my Lute," "Basses," "Means," "sweet," "heavenly consolations," "Diapasons," and "Unisons," Percy plays upon the symbolism of the "Eight" in a far less subtle way than Shakespeare, but in the light of the above findings in regard to Shakespeare's sonnet 8, Percy's own exploitation of the octave conceit is unmistakable.

In view of the clear evidence of musical number symbolism in the sonnets 8 and VIII of Shakespeare and Percy respectively, it may be more than coincidence that Richard Barnfield's sonnet on the theme of concord between music and poetry commencing, "If Musique and sweet Poetrie agree," appeared under the number VIII in Jaggard's piratical *The Passionate Pilgrime*,¹¹ published in 1599 under Shakespeare's name, ten years before Thorpe's printing of *Shake-speare's Sonnets*. It is possible that Jaggard had seen Shakespeare's sonnet 8 in manuscript, or even in print, under that number, and knew of the numerical correspondence. Jaggard had published Barnfield's sonnet under the number I in the previous year, 1598, but without then associating it with Shakespeare.¹²

None of the other well known Elizabethan or Renaissance sonneteers (or their publishers) in England or France published a

musical sonnet under the number 8 or VIII, as far as the writer can ascertain, and it seems, therefore, that the idea was either Shakespeare's or Percy's or that they both hit upon it independently. In view of the sophistication of Shakespeare's sonnet, the general crudity of Percy's youthful sequence and Jaggard's piratical record, it is more than likely that Percy and Jaggard were the imitators. If so, we have a date of 1593 or earlier for Shakespeare's sonnet 8.

VI. Verbal and Thematic Links of Sonnet 128 with Sonnet 8

Sonnet 128 shares with sonnet 8 the theme of music, emphasized again:

- (a) by the repetition of the word "musike" twice in the first line,
- (b) by the personification of the addressee as "musike,"
- (c) by the vocative approach to the addressee as "musike,"
- (d) by the use of the word "concord" (l. 4),
- (e) by the poet's treatment of this "concord" as music which, contrary to natural experience, "offends" in sonnet 8 and which "confounds" in sonnet 128,
- (f) and most noticeably, by the auditory and visual rhyme of "sounds" ("founds") with "confounds" (ll. 2 and 4).

These musical features, common to both sonnets, but absent from in any of the other 152 sonnets of the sequence, are sufficient, without any other supporting evidence, to indicate that the two sonnets were deliberately linked by Shakespeare through musical terms for reasons which will become clear below.

Sonnet 128, as printed in the 1609 Quarto, reads:

128

How oft when thou my musike musike playst,
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers when thou gently swayst,
 The wiry concord that mine eare confounds,
 Do I envie those lackes that nimble leape,
 To kisse the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poore lips which should that harvest reape,
 At the woods bouldnes by thee blushing stand.
 To be so tikled they would change their state,
 And situation with those dancing chips,
 Ore whome their [thy] fingers walke with gentle gate,

Making dead wood more blest then living lips,
 Since sausie lackes so happy are in this,
 Give them their [thy] fingers, me thy lips to kisse.

This sonnet is not as innocent and tender as some commentators have thought. While playfully and bawdily suggestive, it deals with the poet's discordant spirit of envy in respect of his loved one's contact with her musical instrument. The lady is addressed as "my musike," but she is not simply a musical performer. Jacks leap to the "tender inward" of her hand.¹³ She is invited, as she is playing, i.e. as she "gently swayst / The wiry concord that mine eare confounds," to "tickle" her fingers on the poet's lips, which wish to metamorphose ("change their state," l. 9) into the keys of the virginal. Then she is invited to give her lips for the poet to kiss, leaving her fingers to the "sauce lackes" (the keys and, by punning implication, the poet's male rivals). Paradoxically, the "concord" of her playing strikes the speaking poet uncomfortably here, just as "Musick to heare" strikes disturbing sadness into the Young Man of sonnet 8, l. 1).

VII. The Numerical and Musical Links Between the Numbers 128 and 8

The most striking musical link between sonnets 8 and 128 (consistent with their verbal musical links) is found in the fact that the number 128 is, according to the Pythagorean 2:1 octave ratio principle mentioned above, in unison with, but four octaves lower than the number 8. This is explained as follows: take a musical string 8 inches long fixed at the same tension as one 16 inches long. The longer string will sound one octave lower than the other when plucked. The same applies to a string 32 inches long in relation to the one 16 inches long and, further, the 32 inch string will sound two octaves down in relation to the 8 inch string. Demonstrably, a 64 inch string will sound three octaves down and a 128 inch string will sound four octaves down from the original 8 inch string when plucked. All these strings would sound in octave unison. Therefore, 128 is in musical unison with 8, but four octaves down on 8.¹⁴

Significantly, four octaves was the range of the virginal in Shakespeare's time and it is this instrument which, for reasons stated below, the musically and morally "base"/bass Dark Lady is described as playing. The jealous but sexual titillation suggested in sonnet 128 explores a much baser theme than sonnet 8 which urges marriage and procreation.¹⁵ The "base"/bass erotic

theme of sonnet 128 is probably recalled fleetingly and bawdily in another vulgar sonnet, 141 (where there is a musical pun, introduced by the word "tune," on "base"/bass meaning physically and morally low and another pun on "prone" as meaning eager/horizontal),¹⁶

Nor are mine eares with thy tounge tune delighted,
Nor tender feelings to base touches prone,
(141. 5-6)

OED confirms, by the quotation it uses when defining "diapason" (l. c) that, apart from associating the octave or diapason with "concord," Shakespeare could, in a sexually fraught context, also associate it with *deep* and disturbing "bass." OED defines "diapason" (l. c) as "a part in music that produces such (i. e. an octave) consonance; an air or bass sounding in exact concord, i.e. in octaves." The quotation set out there from Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* is,

So I at each sad straine will straine a teare,
And with *deep* grones the Diapason beare:
(1131 -2)

Sonnet 128 clearly conjures up the image of a fortunate keyboard "tikled" erotically by the fingers of the Dark Lady in the presence of the unhappily envious poet whose soul is, in Pythagorean terms, clearly in a state of unease or discord. The relevance to the sonnet number "128" of this inner discord is seen below. The instrument being fingered is, according to the reference to "Iackes" (jacks), the virginal. After the lute and viol, the virginal was the next most popular musical instrument for domestic use in Elizabethan times. The keyboard was arranged, like the modern piano, with naturals and sharps/flats usually extending over four octaves. Queen Elizabeth I possessed a beautiful example of just such an instrument which has survived to this day.¹⁷ Strictly, the fingers do not touch the "Iackes" which are part of the mechanisms which "leape" up when the keys are depressed. Shakespeare deliberately confuses the "Iackes" with keys for the sake of a bawdily suggestive pun on "sausie Iackes" in line 13 (saucy good-for-nothings who, perhaps, suggested to Shakespeare the "expense" of semen in line 1 of the following sonnet 129, i.e. "Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame."

VIII. Numbers Suggested by Fingering the Keyboard

The sonnet, as a whole, emphasizes heavily the fingering of

the keyboard of the virginal by mentioning "chips" (keys) once, "hand" once, "lackes" twice, "wood" three times, and "fingers" three times. The action, set in motion by fingering, is emphasized also with the words "motion," "nimble leape," "tikled," "dancing chips," "fingers walk," and "gentle gate."

Apart from its "four-octaves-lower" number relationship with sonnet 8, the theme of fingering and the number "128" of this sonnet accords with the following phenomenon: from any note of the keyboard, fingering in one direction without omissions, 12 successive semitones of inevitably discordant keys must be fingered consecutively in order to reach the next octave key. The octave key thus reached suggests the number 8, which in turn represents relief in harmonious concord as in sonnet 8, i.e. the hopeful "kisse" with which 128 ends.

In other words, the number 128 suggests the twelve note sequence of semitones followed by the octave note or "Eight." The number may be looked at as 12/8 (as in the case of 12/6 for sonnet 126), thereby exhibiting the elements of discord and concord at the same time.¹⁸ This point has already been touched upon in connection with tuning and the "temperaments," and it is expanded below.

There is further possible corroboration for Shakespeare's intentional association of the sonnet number 128 with the numbers and sounds of the playing of a sequence of twelve semitones followed by the octave note. This is found in lines 3 and 4 of the sonnet: ". . . when thou gently swayst, / The wiry concord that mine eare confounds." The playing of Elizabethan music normally produces harmony or "concord" from the "wiry," tuned virginal, especially in the consonance of the octave. However, the playing of the sequence of twelve semitones "with gentle gate" (1. 11) does "confound" the ear with its lack of harmony. Shakespeare's consciousness of the number may have contributed to this paradoxical and juxtapositional play on the words "concord" and "confounds," the latter of which can mean both "to dumfound" and "to bring into confusion" (OED v. 4 and 6).

IX. Pythagorean Perfect Numbers, 8 with 128

As a corollary to the perfect octave number relationship between sonnets 8 and 128, there may well have been a related mathematical reason for Shakespeare's linking of the two sonnets under these two numbers, both thematically and by poetic technique. The Pythagoreans discovered what they called "Perfect Numbers," i.e. numbers that are the sum of all their divisors other

than themselves, like $6 = 1 + 2 + 3$. The next higher perfect number is 28 then 496, followed by 8128 ($8128 = 1 + 2 + 4 + 8 + 16 + 32 + 64 + 127 + 254 + 508 + 1016 + 2032 + 4064$). The fifth perfect number is 33,550,336. Of these demonstrably rare perfect numbers, the one packed with musical symbolism is 8128, for the "8"s embracing the "12" could be taken to represent musically, in the perfect number, the perfect octave concord which resolves the discord of the consecutively sounded semitones of the 12. The number 8128 may also have attracted Shakespeare because it is not only a perfect number, but is also a Pythagorean triangular number.¹⁹ This Pythagorean triangle has a base of 127, which is, incidentally, the number which Shakespeare gave to the first sonnet of the Dark Lady series. Such triangular numbers were a common topic of arithmology.²⁰

X. Summary and Conclusion

The interrelationship of these two sonnets is found in musical themes evoked by numbers which represent scientific and technical aspects of music that were recognized in Shakespeare's time and later as Pythagorean. These themes and numbers are relevant to the "harmony of the soul" and to the medicine of the soul as applied to hearers of music and verse.²¹ In this sense, the two sonnets are in octave unison, in that they are both musical in theme and have a Pythagorean number relationship, the numbers being in "perfect concord," exactly four octaves apart; and further, their numbers combine in sequence to form the rare "perfect number," 8128. Both deal with a proposed resolution of unease or discord of the soul by union, (unison) i.e wedlock in 8 and the "kisse" in 128. The interrelationship is also found, as has been shown, in combinations of significant words and rhymes common to each of these sonnets, but unique in the sequence as a whole.

In sonnet 8 the theme is the cure for unease caused by "singleness" which makes concord impossible. The cure is to be found in marriage or union (unison) and resultant procreation. This medicine is discerned by the poet in the harmony and concord of the "eight," under which number the musical verse of the sonnet is written.

In sonnet 128 the baser theme is of discordant envy in the poet, provoked by claims of rivals to the Dark Lady's interests and affections. These rivals are, by punning, the "Iackes" of the virginal as well as "sausie Iackes" in the form of other men. Envy gives rise to the poet's desire for the metamorphosis of his "poore" but lustful "living lips" into the "dancing" though "dead"

wooden keys which she fingers. This musical theme appears to have been inspired by the poet's discerning in the number 128, first, four octaves lower Pythagorean "bass/baseness", compared with the 8 and, secondly, the 12 discordant semitones found by consecutive fingering of the keyboard but ending in the pleasing "eight." The musically happy terminal digit "8" of the number "128" is mimicked poetically, after the preceding envious discord which the poet discerned in the "12," by the curative concord of the terminal words of the sonnet—"to kisse."²²

If these findings of Pythagorean and other musical correlations between numbers and content are accepted as the consequence of design rather than of chance, they would indicate that sonnets 8 and 128 were deliberately and ingeniously composed and numbered by Shakespeare. Such a conclusion would constitute a further step towards recognition of extensive numerology in the whole sequence of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.

There is compelling evidence of Shakespeare's repeated practice of expressing octave symbolism in poetic form, which leads to a firm conclusion that the poet's own design is to be observed in the linking of sonnets 8 and 128, as numbers in a Pythagorean 2:1 (or 1:2) octave ratio series. Apart from these musical sonnets, he used this ratio in three of his plays, in each case to celebrate nuptial "unions" to the accompaniment of music. *As You Like It* (V. iv. 108-40) end harmoniously with "Still Music" to Hymen's recital of 8 lines, followed by an interruption, and then 16 more. The Pythagorean point is made by words suggestive of octave unison, such as "here's *eight* that must take hands" (16 hands), "atone" (see OED), "made even," "accord" and "together." *The Two Noble Kinsmen* opens with a stage instruction, "Enter Hymen," and then a nuptial song in which a 2:1 ratio is worked out metrically with 16 long lines and 8 short and each a stanza having 4 long lines and 2 short. The song ends with a dismissal of musical "discord." Finally, after a mention of Hymen and a stage instruction, "They sing" in *The Tempest* (IV. i. 106-19), there follows a nuptial blessing of four lines by Juno and eight by Ceres, upon which Ferdinand comments, ". . . Harmonious charmingly."

Levedale, Stafford

Notes

¹References to Shakespeare's plays are keyed to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974). René Graziani, "The Num-

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bering of Shakespeare's Sonnets: 12, 60, and 126," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 35 (1984), p. 80.

²*Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. The Arden Shakespeare. (Walton-on-Thames Surrey: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1997), pp. 16, 97-101.

³Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge MA and London, 1997) p. 78.

⁴*Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* tells us that passages written in bare octaves, without harmony, are not, strictly speaking, in unison, since octaves are intervals; but they have the effect of unison on the ear, and the term used for them is thus sufficiently appropriate. ed. Eric Blom, 5th Ed. (London: Macmillan, 1954), vol. 6, p. 173.

⁵*As You Like It* (III. ii. 176), *The Merchant of Venice* (IV. i. 131), *Twelfth Night* (IV. ii. 50 and 58).

⁶See "Pythagoras," *Grove*, vol. 6, p. 1026; and see W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926) on "harmonia," vol. 1, 220-25 and 308-19; also see *The Cambridge Ancient History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926), vol. 4, 544-52. As to Shakespeare's Pythagoreanism and the "Harmony of the Spheres," see E. W. Naylor's *Shakespeare and Music* (London: J. M. Dent, 1931), pp. 147-158 and *Shakespeare In His Own Age, Shakespeare Survey*, 17 (1964), pp. 138-45 and 214-18.

⁷See, for example, the organ of St. Mary's Church Lubeck, built in 1516-18, described in *Grove*, vol. 6, p. 294.

⁸In their music, "the one ostensible effort the Greeks made at organizing notes of different pitch was the practice of magadizing. The magadis was a stringed instrument with a bridge that divided the strings at two-thirds their length. The shorter portion of the string then sounded an octave higher than the longer. To magadize, therefore, was to get the voices of children or women to sing in octaves above the voices of men." ("Harmony," Sir Donald Tovey, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [Chicago and London, 1962] vol. 11, p. 203). The bridge was called the magas. The magadis dates from the time of Pythagoras in the sixth century B. C. (*Grove*, vol. 5, p. 502). Shakespeare probably learned of this from Thomas Morley.

⁹*Grove*, vol. 5, p. 435.

¹⁰H. E. Rollins, ed. *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets* (Philadelphia and London, 1944), vol. 1, p. 24.

¹¹*The Passionate Pilgrime*, By W. Shakespeare. SONNETS. *To sundry notes of Musicke*. 1599.

¹²Richard Barnfield, *Poems: In divers humors*. 1598.

¹³Kerrigan remarks "Elizabethans and Jacobean regarded the 'tender inward' of the 'hand' (whether the palm or the soft underside of the fingers) as highly erogenous. Hence Leontes' objections when Polixenes takes his wife's hand: 'But to be paddling palms and pinching fingers, / As they now are. . . Still virginaling (significant verb) / upon his palm?'" (*The Winters Tale*, I. ii. 115-16, 125-6, *William Shakespeare The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. John Kerrigan, (Harmondsworth, Viking-Penguin, 1986), p. 356.

¹⁴The first octave down from 8 is $2 \times 8 = 16$, second octave down $2 \times 16 = 32$, third octave down $2 \times 32 = 64$, fourth octave down $2 \times 64 = 128$.

¹⁵As a "gross" or vulgarly bawdy sonnet, Duncan-Jones identifies 144, i. e. $12 \times 12 = 144$, which OED. sb. 3 defines as a "gross" (Duncan-Jones, p. 402). As to Emilia Bassano, possibly the strongest candidate for the Dark Lady, see A. L. Rowse, *Shakespeare the Man* (London: Macmillan, 1973). And see sonnet 151, l. 9, as to the effect of the suggestiveness of the Italian meaning of the Dark Lady's name upon Shakespeare, especially if that name was "Bass-ano."

¹⁶For the suggestive meanings of "base" and "prone" in sonnet 141, see

Stephen Booth ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977), p. 486, n. 6. For two examples of Shakespeare's puns on "base"/"bass," see *The Taming of The Shrew*, III. i. 46 ff, (First Folio):

Hortensio. Madam, tis now in tune.

Lucentio. All but the base.

Hortensio. The base is right, 'tis the base knave that jars.

and *King Henry IV, Part I*, II. iv. 5. (First Folio):

Prin. I have sounded the verie base string of humility.

¹⁷Illustrated in Ivor Brown. *Shakespeare and his World*. (London. 1964) p. 37.

¹⁸As to the splitting of digits for the purpose of thematic suggestion, see Sonnet 126 and the headnote of Duncan-Jones on 12/6 in the Arden edition, p. 364. As to the "harmony of opposites" and "harmony in tension," see W. K. C. Guthrie on Heraclitus, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1, 435-41 and *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 4, p. 557, already mentioned in note 6 above.

¹⁹See Alastair Fowler's theory in *Truimphal Forms* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press), pp. 184-97.

²⁰As to "Perfect Numbers," see Peter L. Bernstein, *Against The Gods* (New York, 1996), p. 62 and T. Heath, *A History of Greek Mathematics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), vol. 1, pp. 74-76. Pythagorean triangles of 6 and 28 dots respectively, with bases of 3 and 7, are as follows:

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A simple formula for testing the base of a larger triangular number is empiric, i.e. speculate a likely base number, add 1 to it, divide that by 2 and multiply the result by the speculated base number: e.g. speculate 127 as a base, add 1 = 128, divide this by 2 = 64, multiply 64 x 127 = 8128. Incidentally, the base number of 33,550,336, found and tested in this way, is 8191.

²¹Stanley writes: "Pythagoras conceived, that Musick conduced much to health, if used appositely; for he was accustomed to make use of this purification, not perfunctorily. This he called *Medicine by Musick*, which kind of Melody he exercised about the Springtime. He seated him who played on the Lute in the midst, and those who could sing sat round about him; and so he playing, they made a consort of some excellent pleasant Verses, wherewith they seemed exhilarated, and decently composed.

They likewise at another time made use of Musick as of a Medicine, and there were certain pleasant Verses framed, conducing much against the affections and diseases of the mind, and against the dejections and corrodings of the same. Moreover, he composed others against anger and malice, and all such disorders of the mind. There was also another kind of Musick and Song invented against

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unlawful desires. . . .” (Thomas Stanley, *The History of Philosophy*, 1687, Part IX, Chap. VIII, p. 534). Shakespeare recognizes the Pythagorean medicinal value of music for the mind in the song “Orpheus with his lute . . .”:

In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die.

(*King Henry VIII*, III. i. 3-14)

and see also the instances cited by E. I. Fripp in *Shakespeare Man and Artist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938) vol. 1, pp. 130-33, who refers mistakenly to “Platonism” rather than the original Pythagoreanism.

²²The driving force of sonnet 128 is the desire “to kisse” (mentioned twice). In view of the “baseness” of sonnet 128, can this signing-off with the words “to kisse” be merely coincidental or is there a final give-away suggestion of a pun? To “kisse” = bass = buss (“bass,” OED sb. 3 and v. 1. illustrated, 1570). The English verb “Bass” derives from the Latin *Basio*, *basiare* and the English noun “bass” from the Latin *basium*. See also the French *baiser*. The nearest Shakespeare comes to using the old word “bass” in the sense of “kiss” is in *King Henry V* (V. ii.) when Katherine protests about Henry’s proposed *baisées* and *baiser* as being improper in France before nuptials. However, Shakespeare uses the word “buss,” the sound of which is very close to “bass,” on a number of occasions in other plays. There appears to be a paradoxical play on “buss”/bass/bass as opposed to “tops” in *Troilus and Cressida* (IV. v. 220-21): “Yon towers, whose wanton tops do buss the clouds / Must kiss their own feet.” Another play on “kisses”/bass/base is found in Berowne’s speech in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (IV. iii. 217 ff.):

Who sees the heavenly Rosaline . . .
Bowes not his vassall head, and . . .
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast.

Here the play is on kisse/buss and the musical ground/bass.

**“The qualities o’ th’ isle”: The Clemson
Players Perform *The Tempest*
by John R. Ford**

The 1999 Clemson Shakespeare Festival began with a spirited performance of *The Tempest* by the Clemson Players, directed by Chip Egan.¹ It was an apt production for the festival in that from first to last it was a celebration of the powers of theatrical play.

Chip Egan’s and David Hartman’s design for *The Tempest* made wonderful use of the “black box” Bellamy Theater with its simple, thrust stage encircled by the audience. “The notion of an island begs for an arena,” Egan told one Clemson reviewer. “I wanted to land the audience on the island along with the characters for an intense theatrical experience.”² And land us he did on the strangest of new worlds. Within and above the open, thrust acting space, Egan created a three-dimensional labyrinth of tubular steel ladders and stairs, ropes and rails, catwalks and platforms: a cubic acting space of multiple levels and dimensions. It was a design both simple and highly technical, a kind of minimalist scaffolding well suited to the spare economies and confident rationalism of Prospero’s art. “Here’s a maze trod, indeed” (III. iii. 2).³

Such a venue nicely realized the surreal spatial and temporal accommodations the island offered its amazed inhabitants. Prospero might oversee from the highest platform while, at an intermediate level, Ariel and his meaner ministers would choreograph the natural and human movements below them.

Indeed, the powers this performance explored—on the island, in Prospero’s so potent art, in the audience—were the powers of performance. The storm was a case in point, quite literally created by art. It began suggestively with whiffs of smoke and the recorded sound of the Doors singing “Riders of the Storm.” The music and smoky effects, appropriate enough cues for the opening of this play, also provoked memories, for many in the audience, of yet another world, one of innocence, violence, and hallucinatory visions. Its effect on us was no less than the memory-inducing spectacles that would occur within the play.

As the storm heightened, the song changed. Ariel could be seen choreographing his spirits into a dance that became the storm, the court members below tossed about their cabins, keeping time with Ariel’s violent rhythms. They really did assist the storm. Then, as the tempest eased, the mariners removed their

garments, revealing themselves to be Ariel's actors, "all spirits." As they handed their costumes to Ariel, now a kind of actor-manager, each spirit-actor scampered across the various catwalks and leaped through the black curtains. They were out of our sight now, dissolved, leaving not a rack behind.

The audience became a source of coveted power in this production. At various times, Prospero, Ariel, and Caliban all courted it. When Caliban (R. W. Smith) first presented his case for the island, reminding Prospero that

[w]hen thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me, and made much of me; wouldst give
me
Water with berries in't; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less
That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee,
(I. ii. 334-38)

Caliban directed these words, not so much to Prospero, as to us, as if we indeed possessed the power to "release [him] from [his] bands" (Epilogue, 9). Ariel secretly practiced his master's spells on us, a hopeful apprentice. Ferdinand, stunned by Ariel's song, curiously scanned the audience as he imagined "some god o' th' island" upon whom such music "waits" (I. ii. 391-92). Even Stephano and Trinculo, in their inebriated search for *their* music, glanced toward us. And when Prospero roared to the elfin powers that animate "the hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves," the printless forces that set to rhythm the ebbing and flowing sea, he looked, not at the heavens, but at the audience, at all of us, surrounding that thrust stage like Prospero's circle, weak masters though we were. Little wonder that Miranda included us in the "goodly people" she celebrated.

The production's experiments with theatrical illusion were their most playful, perhaps even their most mischievous, during the masque scene. That scene is, of course, notoriously difficult, often disastrous for modern audiences, and not merely for its lengthy and unfamiliar mythological and allegorical allusions. Prospero presents the pageant as a reward for Miranda and Ferdinand, but it is also a test, both for them and for us. Through the palpable presence of such mythical figures as Juno, Ceres, and Iris before our very eyes, the play makes us *believe* in them and in their power to bless and make rich and fecund the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, only to have them suddenly dissolve, again before our very eyes. We are asked to believe and not believe at the same time, as we always are when we respond to

theatrical illusions, but here that capacity is linked to larger, spiritual issues. As in all of Shakespeare's late romances, "it is requir'd / [we] do awake [our] faith" (*WT*, V. iii. 94-95).⁴

This production re-presented the masque scene in a daring style that risked some of the spiritual wonder of the spectacle in order to discover a clarity and immediacy often missing from modern performances. And if these figures suffered any loss of mythic dignity, the scene more than made up for that by creating its own myth of theatrical power. It took the form of a hilarious play within the play. There was more than a hint of "Pyramus and Thisbe" when director Ariel, as exasperated as Peter Quince ever was, tried to coax his actors through a hopelessly alien script for the benefit of on-and off-stage audiences whose responses ranged from delightful indulgence to gentle mockery. Actors missed cues and stumbled through all kinds of poetic thickets. Three times "Great Juno" failed to make her entrance until at last she was pushed onto the stage as Ceres dryly observed, "I know her by her gait" (IV. i. 102).

It was a brilliant strategy. The actors' comic difficulties with the scene entirely inoculated the audience from theirs. When Juno finally did appear, the cause of her stage fright was clear enough. "She" turned out to be a male actor (John Keebler) with the physique of an offensive lineman, awkwardly cross-dressed as Juno and not at all happy in the role. The audience's laughter, at first simply directed at Juno, had to adjust itself as it took in Miranda's wonder. It must have been difficult enough for Miranda to accommodate the brave spectacle of so many goodly people. But this was clearly her first encounter with a crossed-dressed actor. Once again, the actor's comic response "placed" the audience's slight unease with a theatrical convention, absorbing it into the forgiving environment of imagination and performance. This production of *The Tempest* reminded us of the unity of Shakespeare's dramatic imagination since one of the last and most experimental of his works would recall one of the earliest, *The Comedy of Errors*. The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

The actors brought to their roles a similar balance between the wondrous and the ordinary. Prospero (Kermit Brown) was clearly a source of power and mystery. But by restraining Prospero's magical and magisterial presence, Brown found the human and the comic in Prospero, particularly as a father. He was silly like us. When Prospero, giving his daughter to Ferdinand, suddenly warned him of the dangers he would incur should he "break her virgin-knot before / All sanctimonious ceremonies" (IV. i. 15-16),

Brown lowered his voice, embracing his future son-in-law as he gently guided him toward a more private space, man to man. Ferdinand (Michael Short) obediently obliged but managed to steal a wave over his shoulder at Miranda (Alison Burpee). In Ferdinand and Miranda's exchanges, there was the real excitement of sexual discovery. Trinculo's (Libby King) inspired comedy never lost its human center, often giving familiar comic lines a wonderful freshness. When, for example, Trinculo responded to Ariel's ventriloquized "thou liest," his exaggerated defensiveness and comic terror had room for something else: a moment of genuine curiosity. Where the devil *did* they learn our language?

Ariel (Lisa Mercer) seemed to embody the transformative playfulness of this production. Although Ariel is a role open to both male and female actors, often the *kind* of Ariel we get is signaled by gender, male actors emphasizing the athletic and rebellious features of the role, female actors the imaginative and "delicate" Ariel. This Ariel was all of these—and more. She moved through the mazes of the set like a gymnast. When she choreographed the storm, her liquid movements were those of a dancer. She could be deftly comic, as in the masque scene or in her attempts to mimic her master's art, or mysterious. Alternately provocative and demure with Prospero, this was one actor who delighted in the metamorphic resources of her art. She flamed amazement.

One of the many achievements of the Clemson Shakespeare Festival is its enabling inclusiveness, its capacity to bring together, through a shared language and a shared excitement, a gathering of teachers, students, scholars, actors, and community members from all kinds of interests and professions. Such a wild assortment might re-discover "the time of good neighbors," whose passing Benedick laments in *Much Ado About Nothing*. It also describes an audience. This production of *The Tempest* was a celebration of imagination and audience, creating—and enabling us to re-create—"a most majestic vision, and / Harmonious charmingly" (IV. i. 118-19).

Delta State University

Notes

¹The Clemson Players, *The Tempest*. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Chip Egan. Clemson, SC. 20, 21 Feb. 1999.

²Andrea M. DeGaetani, "Shakespearean Play Storms into the Brooks Center,"

Vol. XIX
Clemson Players Perform *The Tempest*

rev. *The Tempest*. Dir. Chip Egan. *The Tiger*. 19 Feb. 1999.

³Shakespeare, William, *The Tempest*. ed. Frank Kermode. The Arden Shakespeare. (London: Methuen, 1964). All quotations from *The Tempest* are from this edition and cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴Shakespeare, William, *The Winter's Tale*. Ed. J. H. P. Pafford. The Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1963).

The 1999 Ashland Shakespeare Festival

by Michael W. Shurgot

For its 1999 season, the Ashland Shakespeare Festival offered four Shakespearean plays: an immensely disappointing *2 Henry IV* that, for this reviewer, made no theatrical sense; conversely, a marvelously theatrical *Pericles*; an engaging *Much Ado About Nothing* set in early 20th century Argentina; and a truly profound *Othello* that, like all brilliant theatre, transcended its time and place.

Libby Appel's casting of *2 Henry IV* was, in some ways, quite "Elizabethan." The all-male cast of fifteen actors and two musicians used doubling indicative of the versatility that we assume marked Shakespeare's company. For example, David Kelly played both Prince Humphrey and Doll Tearsheet; Richard Farrell was Lord Chief Justice as well as Shadow and Peto; J. P. Phillips was The Archbishop of York as well as Feeble and Will; and G. Valmont Thomas acted both Colville and Mistress Quickly. Further, Appel suggested the endless destruction of war by employing sets and costumes evocative of both Elizabethan and modern war; as Ms. Appel remarks, "People of the war-wracked 20th century understand too well the King's cry, 'Oh, my poor kingdom, sick with civil blows.'"

These historical notes aside, Appel's production was theatrically muddled. One expects a director and her actors to "take seriously" as theatre all parts of a Shakespearean play, so that both the "historical" and the "comic" portions of a *2 Henry IV* will be acted with equal respect for the script. But Appel violated this theatrical principle. During the tavern scenes, especially in II. iv, most of the lines delivered by Falstaff, Mistress Quickly, Doll Tearsheet, etc., were preceded by silly musical "preludes" from above, such as drum rolls or striking a cow bell. Such sounds signaled the theatrical "otherness" of these lines and their speakers, effectively removing the tavern characters from the theatrical context of the whole play by isolating them as cheap vaudeville banter. To paraphrase one of Falstaff's bawdier lines, combined with the mixed ancient-modern decor this production was neither fish nor fowl: one knew not what to make of it.

A further complication was G. Valmont Thomas' playing Mistress Quickly as a black drag queen, à la Flip Wilson's TV character Geraldine, complete with the high pitched voice and the very exaggerated wrist action. Besides risking criticism for

stereotyping gay African American men, Appel's choice added another level of confusing artificiality to the production: was this a sixteenth-century tavern, on the eve of yet more divisive rebellion, as the costumes suggested; or was this a modern gay bar with drag queens playing the "abandoned mistress" for their old fat lover headed for World War II? Or both? Besides the artificiality of the musical preludes during the tavern scenes, the overdone drag queen approach virtually destroyed any possibility that spectators could take seriously the real pathos in lines such as Doll's "Thou art going to the wars, and whether / I shall ever see thee again or no, there is nobody cares" (II. iv. 67-68).¹

As if all the above were not confusing enough, Appel concluded her production with one of the most theatrically dishonest moments I have ever seen on stage. After his humbling dismissal by Dan Donohue's regal Henry V, which Ken Albers as Falstaff had set up quite well by crashing through Shallow's orchard when hearing of the old king's death, Falstaff suddenly returned from the Fleet to join the entire company in a song praising Henry V as his royal banner unfurled behind them from the upper balcony. Since the company will perform *Henry V* in 2000, one assumes that this banner was a visual advertisement of the coming season; but as a conclusion to *2 Henry IV*, watching Falstaff singing arm-in-arm with the Lord Chief Justice(!) destroyed the artistic integrity of the production, reducing it to silly promotion for next year's production.

Laird Williamson's *Pericles* was a feast for the eyes, a truly gorgeous theatrical "spectacle" executed brilliantly by scenic designer Ralph Funicello, costume designer Deborah M. Dryden, and lighting designer Chris Parry. As befitting the play's epic plot and its continual test of spectators' imaginative power, Williamson wisely eschewed dramatic realism for a fanciful, imaginative Mediterranean journey with *Pericles*.

Williamson emphasized the mythic nature of the play by employing a masked chorus throughout the production, uniting the disparate scenes and adventures while suggesting that theirs was a tale of magical adventure for all time. In addition to the dazzling costumes and colorful and imaginative sets, such as the walls of beaten gold at Antiochus' palace and the shimmering, multi-colored candlelight that bathed Simonides' court, Williamson and Funicello created several imaginative theatrical moments. For example, the three fishermen of II. i pulled huge nets from the sea, suggested only by long ropes strung across the stage. To depict the storms that *Pericles* endures on his journeys, especially in III. i, actors pulled mightily on ropes suspended

from the ceiling (the imagined heavens, the source of the storms), to suggest their attempts to control the sails, or moved harmoniously back and forth to mimic the oars they pulled. The burial of Thasia at sea in III. i featured a huge, triangular white sheet, hung from the top of the stage, which was initially the main sail of the ship and then was suddenly pulled down and used as the winding sheet for the queen's burial. For the brothel at Mytilene, the stage was flooded with intense red lights, and huge red drapes dangled from the ceiling.

The reunion of Pericles and Marina and then Thasia in act five captured beautifully the visual features of this production. Marina cradled the harp, a symbol of music and harmony, that she had carried with her throughout the play. At Pericles' recognition of Marina, the music of her harp magically filled the theatre, and, like Lear at his reunion with Cordelia, Pericles donned a white robe as vivid lights again flooded the stage. In Diana's temple, all aglow with huge candles and beautifully colored silk streamers as background, the sheer beauty of the setting convinced spectators that such "magical" reunions could indeed be made "real" by the representational power of theatre.

James Edmondson, one of Ashland's most accomplished actors and directors, used the Argentinean setting of his *Much Ado About Nothing* to highlight the exotic in his production, much as the Italian setting must have evoked for Shakespeare's London spectators. The women of Leonato's wealthy household wore delicate lace gowns; the returning soldiers (except for Don John's black garb) wore bright green uniforms, hardly tarnished by war; and, at the masked ball of II. i, all wore the elaborate costumes and the large, grotesque masks of a Latin American Mardi Gras, which were eerily rolled down stage on a portable rack. Additionally, with one questionable exception which is discussed below, this production used superbly the racially mixed casting which Ashland has actively promoted and for which it is justly praised.

As they exchanged their sharp retorts in the opening scene, Elizabeth Norment's Beatrice and Mark Murphey's Benedick were initially quite cool, indicating not a repressed, long standing interest in each other, as the scene is often staged, but rather real disdain for the other's presence. Thus, when Benedick pleaded with Don Pedro for "any service to the world's end," spectators knew he meant it; he really would have gone to "the furthest inch of Asia" to fetch toothpicks. This approach made his and Beatrice's eventual "conversions" to love harder to accept, setting up significant challenges to Murphey and Norment later in the play,

and it contrasted sharply with Hero's passive acceptance of Leonato's will and the hand of Claudio, played by Leith Burke with an emotional immaturity that made his bravado and defiance later in the play credible.

Murphey played Benedick's soliloquy in II. iii, before the "arbor" scene, as a direct appeal to his (mostly male) spectators; several times Murphey stopped, pointed to a particular man, and then continued his soliloquy as a direct appeal to him for approval. Murphey used the circular arbor which stood center stage; he crawled over and under it, slid around its sides as the conspirators moved about the stage, and at one point poked his foot through the wire-mesh top, so that he was "stuck" as Claudio, Don Pedro, and Leonato, pointing hilariously to his boot, spoke directly beneath him. Finally "escaping" from the conspirators, Murphey dashed down stage and jumped over the front edge, sitting next to a male spectator and impromptly borrowing the man's hat to "conceal" himself. Murphey then began his second soliloquy, "This can be no trick, the conference was sadly borne," (II. iii. 216-17), down among the spectators, again addressing himself to specific men in the audience and obviously pleading for support. Norment also used the arbor during her scene with Hero and Ursula, suggesting that both Beatrice and Benedick were similarly "snared" in this Latin American neo-Eden.

In their ridiculous motley, the "Watch," led by Sandy McCallum's Dogberry, was hysterical. Verges' Don Quixote helmet and hurricane lamp, George Seacole in his Scotch plaid pants and Napoleonic army jacket, Walter Worthy in his guerrilla fatigues, and Dogberry in his Prussian military garb, complete with feathered hat, were, with Hugh Outcake, as wonderfully disjointed and haphazard as their "uniforms" suggested, and thus all the more comic in their eventual success at "comprehending" the "auspicious" villains. The drunken Borachio and Conrade were "overheard" by the Watch concealed under a huge laundry basket and when caught, were then carried on stage in the same basket and unceremoniously dumped, too drunk and dumbfounded to grasp the utter stupidity of being "comprehended" by this group of inept fools who, as Feste might have said, wore as much motley in their brains as they did upon their backs.

The deception of Claudio involved a curious casting decision which might suggest that Edmondson, for all his experience at Ashland, did not quite trust his audience. Melany Bell, who played Hero, and Deidrie Henry, who played Margaret, are both African American, and this casting might have been done to make more plausible for spectators the crucial scene we do not see:

Margaret at Hero's chamber window talking to Borachio. This deception scene and the strange circumstance that Beatrice was not with Hero that one night stretch spectators' credulity, and while casting both Hero and Margaret with black actors could have made the deception more credible, it also questioned Ashland's practice of blind casting of white and black actors.

The wedding scene of IV. i, lighted by dozens of candles rolled out on stage, aptly suggested the interior of a church. The solemnity of the scene was shattered by first Claudio's and then especially Leonato's vicious turning on Hero. Moments later, as Beatrice and Benedick approached each other center stage, Beatrice's rage was palpable, almost audible. Before uttering "Kill Claudio," she paused noticeably, as if insuring that every spectator would hear her words. The second "wedding scene" was eerie and provocative. This time, death masks were rolled on stage, suggesting not only the "death" of Hero but also the mythic movement from death to life represented by Hero's marriage to Claudio and simultaneously the ancient origins of comedy in ritualistic ceremonies celebrating the triumph of life over death.

Dressed in white, Benedick and Beatrice closed the play with a final contest of wit: playing a game of "Who can be the more sarcastic in pretending not to be in love?" Their vocal contest brought the "play" back to the actors' vocal talent and thus to the element that had marked their encounters from the beginning of Shakespeare's comedy.

The gem of this season was Tony Taccone's stunning *Othello*, with Derrick Lee Weeden as Othello, Amy Cronise as Desdemona, and Anthony Heald as Iago. As Weeden explained in his "Noon Talk" about the play, the central character of this play is Othello, not Iago, and Weeden's performance and Taccone's direction substantiated this remark.

Spectators entering the theatre within ten minutes of curtain time saw Weeden and Cronise, in splendid white robes, enter slowly and then calmly sit at opposite ends of a shallow, rectangular pool staring towards the audience, as if in contemplation of their roles. Behind them, a wall of latticed, dark wooden panels, resembling those often used in Japanese or Chinese gardens, divided the stage vertically and horizontally. Soft, pulsating drumming, gradually increasing in intensity and rhythm, created a sense of expectancy. Immediately after a sudden blackout, Roderigo's bellowed "Tush! never tell me?" ignited the stage, and his and Iago's violent, hateful energy erupted into the theatre as Othello and Desdemona exited. Anthony Heald's Iago, short, burly, and savagely angry, screamed his racist and misogynistic

venom throughout the play, revealing an Iago who made perfect sense of his recognition in act five that Michael Cassio "hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly" (V. i. 19-20). This Iago hated Othello, Desdemona, Aemilia, Cassio, Roderigo, and, as he revealed with horrifying clarity in his maniacal soliloquies, love: everything that smacked of human tenderness. Thus, in his character there was no possibility for goodness, no room for love of self; and his ferocious rage was directed equally at everyone he longed to destroy.

Despite Heald's frightening Iago, the production truly belonged to Weeden's Othello and Cronise's Desdemona. Weeden is a large, powerful man with immensely strong arms and a deep, resonating bass voice. On stage, he embodied the physical strength one assumes would have been required to survive his history of war and bondage, thus denoting the physical basis for the sexual attraction which Cronise's Desdemona, stately, blonde, and very beautiful, showed so often, especially upon Othello's arrival on Cyprus. Early in II. iii, after Othello instructs Cassio to "look you to the guard tonight," Weeden and Cronise elegantly captured the romance and sexual desire between them. In their shimmering, loosely fitting white robes, Othello held Desdemona's hand as he whispered "Come, my dear love." Then, after a long, tender, passionate kiss, he gently picked her up as, smiling and laughing lightly, they exited. It was a moment of pure joy in each other's presence, Donne's notion of the lover as one's whole world brilliantly imaged in the white of their sexual and emotional innocence. And Iago's destruction of this innocence was brutal.

After Desdemona left the stage in III. iii, Othello and Iago moved to racks of fencing weapons; this scene was to be an athletic sparring between two soldiers honing their skills. As Iago's penetrating questions and insinuations increased in intensity, so did their physical contact, as if one inspired the other. The key moment was Iago's line, "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy" (III. iii. 165). I have never before heard an Iago so emphasize the word "jealousy" in this speech. Heald screamed the word, revealing not only the intensity of his own jealousy, and thereby cementing the impression from his soliloquies that he truly did suspect Othello and Cassio with Aemilia, but also how eagerly he desired to enmesh Othello in his own mental and sexual torture. When Desdemona entered with Aemilia, Othello turned from her, his face contorted in confusion, and then angrily dismissed the handkerchief. Iago mirrored this anger when he violently pushed Aemilia away after grabbing Desdemona's handkerchief from

The Upstart Crow

her. Then, after raging "Othello's occupation's gone" and "Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore," he grabbed Iago and held his head in the pool through "answer my waked wrath." At this moment, spectators saw clearly the enormous physical power that Othello's exploits required and that Weeden embodied on stage. Thus, when Othello struck Desdemona violently in IV. i, and then when he stood over her menacingly in IV. ii, one sensed unequivocally the real physical danger she faced. Indeed, the combination of Taccone's staging of the opening, contemplative tableau; the wonderful innocence and sexual energy between Othello and Desdemona in II. iii; and the verbal and physical violence of Othello in act four created palpable apprehension, if not real terror, among spectators. The overall intensity of the acting, especially among the three leads, achieved the ideal of theatre: the near conviction among the audience, which I heard many spectators say as they exited, that what they had seen was not theatre but reality.

This intense "realization" of the script worked brilliantly for the willow scene. The sheer magnitude and violence of Othello's reactions to his jealousy made the candle-lit, eerily quiet scene between Desdemona and Aemilia an enormous emotional relief. In teaching *Othello*, which I often call "The Tragedy of Aemilia" because of the mystery of her motivations, the question "Why doesn't Aemilia ever tell Desdemona about the handkerchief?" was more pronounced than in any other production of the play I have seen. The very peacefulness of this scene and the utter passivity of Desdemona and her complete inability to believe in her husband's violent jealousy emphasized the horror of Aemilia's silence about the one issue that could have prevented Desdemona's death. This horror was further emphasized by Taccone's direction of Heald's demonic hatred; the depth of his anger frightens further as one asks why Aemilia would want to please such a hideous man. Whereas Appel's direction of *2 Henry IV* enervated the script, Taccone's energized *Othello*.

Othello entered in V. ii, again in white, and circled his sleeping wife, also in white. Both Weeden and Cronise paced the scene brilliantly; as his turmoil intensified, so did her resistance. Her pleading was pathetic yet powerful, supplicant yet assertive. Despite his massive strength, Othello struggled to kill Desdemona, as if her spirit were truly indomitable. In his final speech, Othello reverted to the masterful, confident, deliberate speaker we heard in Venice; there was neither self-pity nor anger in his words, only utter resignation at the folly of one who had loved not wisely, but, as II. iii clearly demonstrated, certainly too well. As Othello stood

over their bed and above the pool that symbolized the violent sea that he and Desdemona had crossed in that terrible storm, only to arrive, they thought, safely on Venus island, Othello pulled from a bedpost the final weapon with which he slit his throat. As he fell upon his dead wife, one sensed again in this obvious marital image the sexual energy and passion that such a couple could have experienced.

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Notes

¹All references to the plays are taken from the *Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. Sylvan Barnett. *Henry IV, Part Two*, ed. Norman Holland (New York: Signet, 1998); *Pericles*, ed. Clifford Leech (New York: Signet, 1998); *Much Ado About Nothing*, ed. David L. Stevenson (New York: Signet, 1998); *Othello*, ed. Alvin Kerman (New York: Signet, 1998).



King Henry V (Dan Donohue) Banishes Sir John Falstaff (Ken Albers) in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Production of *Henry IV, Part Two*, 1999.



Pericles (Richard Howard) Marvels at the Revelation that His Daughter, Marina (Jodi Somers) Is Alive in the Oregon Shakespere Festival's Production of *Pericles*, 1999.



Claudio (Leith Burke) and Benedict (Mark Murphey)
Share Thoughts on Love and Marriage in the
Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Production of
Much Ado About Nothing, 1999.



Othello (Derrick Lee Weeden) at the Deathbed of His
Wife, Desdemona (Amy Cronise) in the Oregon
Shakespeare Festival's Production of *Othello*, 1999.

The 1999 Alabama Shakespeare Festival's *Troilus and Cressida* by Craig and Diana Barrow

While *Troilus and Cressida* has been frequently performed in the twentieth century, this year's production of the play was the first by the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in its nearly thirty year history. Perhaps the bitterness and pessimism of the play and the large cast required for a production disheartened the previous art director. The lack of agreement about the play's genre or emotional signature also poses difficulties. Ann Barton in her introduction to *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Riverside Shakespeare* says, "Neither tragedy nor satire, celebration nor parody, *Troilus and Cressida* is innovatory and experimental yet assured."¹ To her the play seems unified even though no single genre is adequate to the play's action. Mark Robert Dodd in "The History of *Troilus and Cressida*" accounts for inconsistencies in the characterization of Ajax, Hector, and Agamemnon by categorizing the play as a chronicle which reduces its scope.² Norman Rabkin, in "*Troilus and Cressida: The Uses of the Double Plot*," suggests that the dramatic unity of the play is a function of the plot. He illustrates the idea, common to the *Troilus and Cressida* love story and the plot to get Achilles back into the war, that "time will ultimately distinguish true value."³ Since the same theme can exist in any genre, the unity of the play is thematic rather than generic. Director Kent Gash in his "Director's Notes" to *Troilus and Cressida* sets the play's focus on a theme of war and lechery, which Shakespeare develops through satire, melodrama, and the tragic dilemma of conduct.⁴ Torn between reason and passion, all the characters, particularly *Troilus* and *Hector*, are affected.

While the Alabama Shakespeare Festival frequently casts Shakespearean plays in other than Renaissance dress, Gash has shaped an action that evokes many eras, not simply the Trojan War, through the talents of his scenic designer, Charles Caldwell, his costume designer, Elizabeth Novak, his composer, Thom Jenkins, and his sound designer, Don Tindall. Characters seem to illustrate many periods in their dress and gestures, so that the production of *Troilus and Cressida* has the feel of a Sam Shepard play such as *Buried Child* or *True West*. Performed in the Octagon, the smaller of the Festival's two theatres with a seating capacity of about two hundred, the production features a thrust stage on two levels, with much of the action on the lower level extending

out on a platform from behind a gauze curtain. Gilt weapons embellish the set, and the arms represent several eras—swords, lances, and spears, but also cannons and Gatling guns. A percussionist and other instrumentalists play throughout the performance above and behind the audience, sometimes thumping out a simple heartbeat, sometimes a dirty blues trumpet wail. When the play opens, the audience hears sounds of shells and bombs whistling through the air and of sirens common during the air raid drills of the Second World War and the Cold War. As characters gather to respond to Hector's funeral at play's end, they walk to Billie Holiday's "I'll Be Seeing You." As usual, when Billie Holiday sings a popular song, her tone indicates impossibility while her lyrics suggest hope. With that ambiguous song in the background, Troilus rejects Cressida as he leaves the stage.

Costumes designate the different sides of the war through color. Trojan men are dressed in black, sometimes in suits of different eras, while the Greeks are dressed in khaki safari shirts with officer insignias on their shoulders and slacks or shorts; most wear sandals, although Agamemnon wears Oxfords. With his shaved head, John Preston plays Ajax, in a comical yet forceful manner; Preston looks and sounds like Jesse Ventura as a Special Forces trooper with a knife strapped to his calf. Thersites sports a clown's red bubble nose and a ragged uniform like those of the other Greeks, while Pandarus wears gay formal attire suitable to a gentleman or a pimp. His role is expanded in this production since he presents the prologue as well as the closing speech of the play. He also appears briefly in a fight scene with Thersites in V. vii. In combat scenes, warriors wear Greek or Roman body armor attached by velcro.

In act three, scene one, Helen, in black pumps, hose, and a slip, looks like Maggie in Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* although Helen is pregnant and Maggie only had hopes to be so. Paris is dressed like a gangster from the 1920's or 1930's, appearing like an enlarged, somewhat lethargic Jimmy Cagney. Early in the play, Cressida is dressed in colors, gold and dark brown, neither Greek nor Trojan, while later in the play she wears blue. When she is exchanged for Antenor, Pandarus helps her on with a Khaki raincoat which she wears to the Greek camp. She appears barefoot and vulnerable in some scenes and wears flats in others like the girl next door in the 1950's. Cassandra's feathered costumes are exotic and seemingly free from any era; her special gift is not simply prophecy but magic. She specializes in turning the water that Hector is to drink into blood, and later, when Hector goes out for the last time to fight the Greeks, she squeezes

an apple or pomegranate, drenching her body in blood. When she is speaking, Heather Robison dominates the scenes in which she appears as an oracle; when silent, she retreats as the sister of Troilus and Hector.

While the audience is smoke-free, the production is not. Patroclus, who wears little more than a towel, is usually smoking a joint of marijuana, which he sometimes shares with his lover, Achilles. Achilles, with an ace bandage on his Achilles heel and ankle, appears dishevelled like a battle-weary Viet Nam veteran. Suggesting a late nineteenth century male domination and power, cigars are also common in the play,

Kent Gash has made few cuts in the play; however, he does reverse two scenes, as Calchas asks for Cressida in exchange for Antenor before Troilus and Cressida declare their love for each other in II. ii. What this shifting does is make Cressida, who is sensitively played by Kathleen McCall, seem more like a victim or pawn than she does in the textual sequence. Gash's direction in other parts of the play strengthens Cressida's victimization, particularly when Agamemnon, Nestor, Menelaus, and Patroclus kiss her when she enters the Greek camp. The kisses are against Cressida's will, and they have the dramatic effect of a mass rape. Even Cressida's betrayal of Troilus with Diomedes seems to be partially a result of her homelessness. Like Desdemona in Cyprus, Cressida is isolated, away from Troy, uncertain perhaps even where home is.

As Paul Whitthorne plays Troilus, the young man is sexually attracted to Cressida although he believes it is romantic love, but he appears to be infatuated with his future role as a faithful lover. He talks of marriage in a war council with his brothers and father, but he never proposes to Cressida and fatalistically accepts the exchange of Antenor for Cressida. In the world of the play, where worth is determined by lives lost or, for Troilus, by the strength of his pose of love, women are simply objects of exchange. Yet, the love of Troilus and Cressida seems more romantically real than the love of Paris and Helen with its "hot blood, hot thoughts, and hot deeds" (III. i. 131-32) so capably demonstrated by Monica Bell and Brian Kurlander, but it still seems a measured passion where "the will is infinite and the execution confin'd" (III. ii. 82).

Homosexual or brotherly love does not fare much better. Ray Chambers as Achilles is ready to drop Patroclus quickly in the production when he receives a letter from Hecuba regarding Polyxena, and the sexual rejection seems to spur Patroclus, ably played by Sam Wellington, into battle, perhaps hoping that his death will move Achilles to the action Patroclus advised. Recall-

ing the love of Helen and Paris, the feeling of Achilles for Patroclus is lustful. Pandarus, sensitively performed by Paul Hebron, for all his weaknesses and faults, is more honest in his romantic love of Troilus. He knows that his love will not be returned, that Troilus loves Cressida; at the end of the production he is not only cursed by Troilus in V. x but is hit so hard in the stomach that he doubles over. Curiously, unlike the BBC production, Kent Gash does not ascribe homosexuality to Thersites as played by Conan McCarty; he seems to be saving Thersites for the role of chorus or fool. In the BBC production, the strength of what Thersites says is undercut by his gay behavior, leaving the character's judgments no foundation. Gash, it seems, wants his audience to listen to what Thersites has to say about war, subordination, and lechery.

Some of the finest actors in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival have major roles in the war plot, which clearly overshadows the love of Troilus and Cressida. The Greek and Trojan war councils are splendid in the play. John Woodson as Hector, though old for the part, handles his speeches well regarding Helen's worth and the foolishness of fighting the war, only to collapse selfishly into his quest for personal honor in combat (II. ii. 192-93). The fight director and movement coach, Colleen Kelly, establishes a nice connection between Hector's fight with Ajax and his unarmed slaying by Achilles' Myrmidons. In the fight with Ajax, he and Hector are tied to a rope; each man in the fight tries to kill the other by pulling or throwing his antagonist in the direction of a man holding a sword. When Hector is slain by the Myrmidons, he is laid out spreadeagle tethered to the whips.

Mark Lewis as Agamemnon is selfishly political, as one would expect. His build and body structure remind one of Bill Clinton; perhaps Gash intends this echo. Timothy Tait as Diomedes does not seem to exhibit the charisma required for this character; the love interest with Cressida seems strained.

The role of Ulysses is especially important in the play. Since he is active in attempting to bring Achilles back into the fighting, he has important reactions to register regarding Cressida's conduct and character, and he acts as guide and confidant to Troilus when they both observe Cressida and Diomedes together. In all of these roles and in his major speeches, Greg Thornton is superb.

Clearly this problem play has been no problem for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Words are clear, all have consequences, and the audience seems totally engaged by the production. Kent Gash solves the problem of generic confusion in the play by making his production the tragic dilemma of a culture. As

he says in his "Director's Notes": "Will we be ruled by instinct and impulse or by intellect? Passion or reason? Will pride and ego inevitably corrupt the most honorable intentions"?⁵

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Notes

¹Ann Barton, *Troilus and Cressida* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), p. 445.

²Mark Robert Dodd, "The History of *Troilus and Cressida*," *The Upstart Crow: A Shakespeare Journal*, 11 (1991), 39-51.

³Norman Rabkin, "*Troilus and Cressida*: the Uses of the Double Plot," *Essays In Shakespearean Criticism*, ed. James L. Calderwood and Harold E. Toliver (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970), p. 309.

⁴Kent Gash, "Director's Notes," *The Cast List* (1999), p. 6.

⁵Gash, p. 6.



Paul Whitthorne and Kathleen McCall as Troilus and Cressida
in the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's Production
of *Troilus and Cressida*, 1999.



Paul Hebron as Pandarus in the Alabama Shakespeare
Festival's Production of *Troilus and Cressida*, 1999.

A Note on the RSC's *Twelfth Night* by H. R. Coursen

Adrian Noble's *Twelfth Night* for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1997-98 did have "an end-of-the-pier feeling" to it, as Susanna Clapp observed (11). It certainly had its moments of "crass vulgarity" (Spencer, 26) and "crudeness" (Gross, 5/8). I was warned not to go but had the ticket and went.¹

This production had an extraordinarily good Sir Andrew in John Quayle. Here was an Andrew who carried his boyhood nickname of "Sonny" into middle age. This Andrew brought his racquet to the club each Saturday to discover that the tennis foursomes had long since been formulated. As he struck up a conversation at the club bar, the other person swung off to meet his dinner partners, leaving Andrew to complete his sentence to his empty glass and then to shake the icecubes for a refill. His smile was genuine, his background impeccable, his emptiness profound. He had been adored as an infant in his mother's arms. He carried himself with an easy elegance, his blazer perfectly tailored, his bowtie knotted off-handedly, his walking stick swinging jauntily. It was the unconscious effect of old money. One knows how to do those things, but so what? His desperate need for friendship and vulnerability to Toby's vicious manipulation was understandable. The payoff in this production was that Malvolio had studied Andrew as the model of aristocratic dress and gesture. Malvolio came out in boater, bow tie, vest, Bermuda shorts, and crosshatched yellow stockings, swinging an uncontrolled tennis bat and wearing all his new clothes at once, a grotesque parody of Andrew. Andrew was endowed with an authenticity which few, if any, productions grant him. An authentic Andrew gave unusual power to Malvolio's desire to join the club. Andrew was what Malvolio aspired to be, but he had what Malvolio could never have. Andrew had been born to the manner. For all of the flaws of this production, the intra-production linkage of these two unsuccessful suitors make my attendance eminently worthwhile.

Given the negative reception that this production received, Quayle's Sir Andrew should be highlighted as a brilliant exception to the production's general failure.

University of Maine, Augusta

Notes

¹Susanna Clapp, 1997, "Review of *Twelfth Night*," *Observer* (28 November), 11.
John Gross, 1997, "Review of *Twelfth Night*," *Sunday Telegraph* (30 November), 5/
8. Charles Spencer, 1997, "Review of *Twelfth Night*," *Daily Telegraph* (27 November), 26.