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

—T. S. Eliot

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

—Walter Pater

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SONNET 126

O thou my lovely boy, who in thy power
Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;
Who hast by waning grown and therein show'st
Thy lovers with ring as thy sweet self grow'st.
If nature, sov'reign mistress over wrack,
As thou go'st onward still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose that her skill
May time disgrace and wretchèd minutes kill.
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure,
She may detain, but not still keep her treasure!
Her audit, though delay'd, answer'd must be,
And her *Quietus* is to render thee.

This modernization is from Paul Ramsey's
THE FICKLE GLASS—A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets





TIME'S FICKLE GLASS

By

R.L. Gifford

OF TRUTH SELF-REFLEXIVENESS IN SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS AND PLAYS

by Paul Ramsey

"Hamlet, the most perfectly realized of the character-dramatists, struggles to distinguish between what seems and what is; and, ironically, but fittingly--as Shakespeare himself does--uses the illusion that is the theatre to search for the reality that is truth."

—Lillian Wilds

Yvor Winters holds that a "poem is a statement in words about a human experience."¹ Allen Tate writes of a stanza of Keats: "The stanza is neither true nor false; it is an object that exists."²

When mentors disagree, what does one do? In this instance, believe them both, for both are right.³ A work of literary art is a statement *and* an artifact; the work of the critic is to relate, discriminate, and accord.

Dryden writes that a dramatic poem should be "*a just and lively image of human nature . . . for the delight and instruction of mankind.*"⁴ An image is an artifact, and *of*--and it may be appropriately both. Artifacts can fit reality. It may in Shakespeare's words through Hamlet's speaking and desiderating, "suit the action to the word, the word to the action . . . hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image."⁵ That is, poetry can tell truth and tell it well. *And* gratify as realized form. It does so through language, and language--as we all well know--does and does not fit our experience of reality. The name Norway spruce does accurately refer to many trees. The syntax of a sentence is not the same as the 'syntax' (structure) of a tree. Hence the struggle, hence the achievement, when fitness is realized.

Much modern theory stresses the unfittingness, the ineptitude of language, the doubts of knowledge, gaps, fissures, incompleteness--sometimes self-dissolvingly so--but the very truth that language imperfectly fits reality implies an ideal (fitness) and the possibility of degrees of fitness, of realization. And--very interesting indeed--we can talk about and sometimes correct ways in which language does not fit reality. Language is self-transcendent, which is to say we can talk about lacks in the language. Aristotle writes in the *Poetics* "to cast seed is to sow, but there is no special word for the casting of rays by the sun; yet this is to the sunlight as sowing is to seed, and therefore it has been said of the sun that it is 'sowing its divine rays'."⁶ Aristotle has pointed out a hole in the Greek (and the English) language and has in the process corrected it. The job of the dramatist and critic is to make

things truly fit, to be well realized. Fitness is not a simple concept.

Artifact, language, mimesis (truth-telling, verisimilitude, aboutness, representation)--the good writer is aware of these and struggles to accord them. Insofar as the poem or play embodies that basic awareness, the poem or play is to that degree self-reflexive.

Each poem or play, known as such, is throughout self-reflexive. Since the writer and audience are conscious that the literary work is other than the reality it would portray or create, the literary artifact is always at least peripherally self-aware, self-reflexive. Words are not the things they name, though words are a non-trivial kind of thing.

Renaissance poets and playwrights were very self-aware: they delighted in the visibly artful, even as they often were warned, and did warn, against the abuses of rhetoric. Shakespeare is elaborately and often displayingly artful, and insists on the plainness of his style and truth. Doubt and trust of his art collide and sometimes join.

Shakespeare's sonnets are self-reflexive in various ways. First, the sonnet is a convention, a form, not to be written by accident or without awareness. A sonnet constitutes on a page a visible form, a shape. The form is not the subject (a love is not fourteen lines long) and yet must relate.

The form of the Shakespearean sonnet inevitably involves paragraphing.⁷ If the paragraphs fit the form (with or without complexities of subordering) they fit: if they fail to fit the form, the disruption is manifest, visible, audible, calling forth awareness of itself.

Shakespeare's sonnets are often about sonnets or poetry or style quite directly, offering high claims and severe doubts: "His beauty shall in these black lines be seen" (63.13), "And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand" (60.13); "Why is my verse so barren of new pride" (76.1), "we . . . these present days, / Have eyes to wonder but lack tongues to praise" (106.14). Sometimes the poems (or a poem or line) become immediately self-reflexive: "So til the judgment that your self arise / You live in *this*, and dwell in lovers' eyes" or "My life hath *in this line* some interest" (55.13-14 and 73.4 respectively, italics mine). "This" and "this line" mean, synecdochically, the poems, but also quite specifically the poem and line.

Shakespeare's sonnets are self-reflexive because the poet is self-reflective, aware of himself and reflecting about himself, modest, hopeful, doubtful, self-laudatory, self-angered, self-demeaning, self-blaming, displeased with his profession as poet and actor and with his style and language. What is said in and of the sonnets is conventional, metaphorical, and personal--entangledly all three. The sonnets--entangledly involved with the poet's involvements--express confusion and division and uncertainty and seek clarity, realization, permanent and earned esteem.

The poet of the sonnets is the poet-dramatist of the plays and poet and

dramatist of doubts and ambitions therein. Shakespeare loves metaphor and analogy and explores by and through metaphors and analogies; and one can (with some work and some truth) take many an individual metaphor or *topos* as dominant in theme and structure. *Romeo and Juliet* is a play about herbs as medicine and poison, about grace and rude will. Yes. *Romeo and Juliet* is about meditation which does not accord.⁸ Yes. Mercutio and Friar Lawrence intervene and cause trouble. *Romeo and Juliet* is about light and dark, about death as bridegroom, about violent delights with violent ends, about steerage by the stars, about glooming peace. Yes, and in some sense truly--those images are each real, potent, interlacing. Yet none works apart or alone, or could or do yield structure apart from the developed and meaningful action.

It is not, then, surprising that modern scholars and critics make much of role-playing, of actors as dramatists, of language aware of language, of metalanguage and metadrama.⁹ Among the many ways of illumining Shakespeare's work, those figurations do have a special plausibility: it is natural that a poet and dramatist will think and reflect and work in terms of his consciousness of poetry and drama. Further, the self-reflexiveness in the sonnets is *evidence* (since there the poet says, "My name is Will" [136.14, italics in text omitted]) that we are right to take seriously the same themes and concerns and entanglements in the plays. Therein are hopes, realizations, glories, the exaltation and magic of linguistic and dramatic success; and also, in Richard Fly's words, the "gloomy realization that his medium . . . resist [s] . . . full actualization of form and meaning."¹⁰ The struggle is there, as subject, awareness, engagement--the struggle is to achieve.

Self-reflexiveness in the plays takes many forms: metaphors of theatricality, plays-within-plays, prologues, epilogues, direct speech about language or poetry or drama. Examples abound. I shall take two, as exemplary of something of the extremes or tones.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia, winding up various things successfully, blithely of a sudden ways, turning to Antonio: "Unseal the letter soon; / There you shall find three of your argosies / Are richly come to harbor suddenly. / You shall not know by that strange accident / I chanced on this letter" [V.i.275-278]. Portia has no business to have the letter or to know what is behind its seal, and Shakespeare solves the little problem of causation by laughing it aside. The god has descended to convey the information in an invisible and non-existent machine. "You shall not know"! And thus we know all we need or wish to, in good fun.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra gives, as one reason for her decision to commit suicide that, if she is taken to Rome "I shall see / Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness / I- th' posture of a whore" [V.ii.219-221]. The scorn is bitter, and self-turned on the mouth of the boy actor squeaking the poet's words. The contempt for the actor, for drama and language, for the

play-ness of the play, wrench deep and almost (not quite) undercut, unconstruct, the grandeur of the final performance. Cleopatra is an actress to the last. The performance is magnificent; we are not allowed to forget that the performance is--utterably--a performance.

Playfulness, and deeply bitter self-engaging contempt-- Shakespeare dramatizes and versifies both, and many a mode between, very well. He dramatizes and versifies his materials so well that it is hard to tell where he stands, is, or vanishes to. Since he persuades us of many and inconsistent things, how are we to tell of what *he* is persuaded? That is--in my judgment--the central problem of the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays.

We sometimes can tell where a *play* stands thematically: by the authority of chorus and soliloquy; by the sympathy and antipathy created toward characters (there is no doubt whose side we are on in *King Lear*); by the special authority given to Horatio, an authority repeatedly and strongly verified throughout the play, so that we must, in all conscience and logic, take his final speeches at full credence. In *Othello* a logic (real, not metaphorical) unfolds through speech on speech, and by events, toward salvation or damnation of the characters.¹¹

Yet to find where a play stands is not, as such, to find where the author personally stands, or what he believes. The author's job is to persuade us by and of the play; whether he personally shares or rejects or qualifies or is indifferent to the themes realized, is another question.

But, even there, there are things to learn and reasonably to say. One can hardly doubt that Hamlet's remarks (largely extraneous to the needs of the developing action) about what constitutes good acting, reflect Shakespeare's own. In those remarks the central doctrines are just mimesis (to show virtue her feature and scorn her image) and propriety (to suit action to word and word to action). To understand that is to understand something of moment about Shakespeare's mind and art. It is also reasonable to conclude that the self-reflexiveness shows something non-trivial about Shakespeare. The love and distrust of language, the hopes and struggles and doubts, self-blame and self-uncertainty, the severe moral score and judgment, the impassioned love of ideals and of truth--all vividly realized in the sonnets--are also very much at work in the plays, in struggle and imperfection and recurrent hope. The imperfection implicates the ideal of perfection; the struggle is not to deconstruct, but to achieve.

The University of Tennessee-Chattanooga

Denying Denial

The reposed bland expression opposes inference
 Because faces are for not declaring more than for declaring
 And the witnessing is as daily as the servitude
 To habits we build and are, habits to cling forth
 As tendrils entangling the attemptings of knowledge
 With the many processions of stilled event,
 Thought vanishing into habit without repose;
 And yet we may struggle against habits and recognize
 Some likely signs of deception or incertitude.

The chalk writes on the board, Do Not Enter.
 Outside the board is, it could be, a schoolroom
 With glad faces lifting the candles of their smiles
 Into the sunshine's wide and normal light.
 It could be, but what is written on the board,
 Where he who looks can see, is written there,
 And to write contrarily is to write on the board;
 And yet, for all our theories, knowledge enters through
 The surfaces of our language--undescribed.

To see beneath the sea's surfaces is to see
 Depth after depth becoming transparent
 To the very vision or light which penetrates,
 Vision circumscribing the vision every meter of advance;
 And yet what we truly see is present, tentacle or carapace or claw,
 And beings we have not yet seen swim, even now, under the waters.

—Paul Ramsey

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Notes

¹Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 11.

²Allen Tate, *On the Limits of Poetry* (New York: The Swallow Press and William Morrow, 1948), p. 2.

³Neither was making an exclusive statement. Yvor Winters writes, *Defense*, p. 363, "[The] description [of a poem as a "statement of words . . ."] . . . is not offered as a complete description," and Tate writes, nobly, that the poet "is responsible . . . for the mastery of a disciplined language which will not shun the full report of the reality conveyed to him by his awareness: he must hold, in Yeats's great phrase, reality and justice in a single thought." *The Forlorn Demon* (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), p. 29.

⁴John Dryden, "An Essay of Dramatic Poesy," *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*, ed. George Watson, 2 vol. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1962), I, 25 (italics in text).

⁵*Hamlet*, (III.ii.17-23) in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), p. 1161. All quotations from Shakespeare are from this edition.

⁶Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *On Poetry and Style*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1958, paper), Chapter 21, p. 45.

⁷See Paul Ramsey, *The Fickle Glass: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), Chapter 6, esp. pp. 124-125.

⁸See Richard Fly, *Shakespeare's Mediated World* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), esp. Chapter 1.

⁹James T. Calderwood, *Metadrama in Shakespeare's Henriad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 1-8; Robert Egan, *Drama within Drama: Shakespeare's Sense of His Art* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975); Richard Fly, *Shakespeare's . . . World*; G. R. Hibbard, *The Making of Shakespeare's Dramatic Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), esp. the first two essays; L. C. Knights, "Rhetoric and Insincerity," and G. K. Hunter, "Poem and Contest in *Love's Labour's Lost*," pp. 25-38, both in *Shakespeare's Styles: Essays in Honor of Kenneth Muir*, ed. Philip Edwards et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Stanford M. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *The Drama of Social Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Barbara A. Mowat, *The Dramaturgy of Shakespeare's Romances* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1976); Lillian Wilds, *Shakespeare's Character-Dramatists* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache, 1975); and James Winny, *The Player King* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968).

¹⁰Fly, *Shakespeare's . . . World*, pp. 55-56.

¹¹So at least it is argued in Paul Ramsey, "Othello: The Logic of Damnation," *The Upstart Crow*, 1 (1978): 24-35.

VERDI'S FALSTAFF AND THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR *By Robert B. Fazakerly*

The basic story of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* can be traced back to Italian sources. Available to Shakespeare was a version entitled *The Tale of the Two Lovers of Pisa*, which was an English translation of *Le Tredici Piacevole Notte* by Straparola. The story may go all the way back to the fourteenth century--perhaps to the Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio, a friend of Petrarch and a lecturer at the University of Florence.

Shakespeare wrote his version around 1600. He had already created Sir John Falstaff in *I Henry IV*, and was now organizing an entire play around him at the Queen's request (so the story goes), who wished to see "Sir John in love." Falstaff gets no respect in *The Merry Wives*; he is successively dumped into the Thames, cudged quite thoroughly while attempting a disguised escape, and finally spooked into repentance at midnight in Windsor Park. In the end, a penitent Sir John is accepted back into the group.

Many Shakespeare scholars object to the depth of ignominy to which Falstaff falls in *The Merry Wives*. In the King Henry plays, Falstaff commands a certain dignity in spite of his machinations and braggadocio. He and Hotspur represent two alternatives which young Prince Hal could choose. Hal eventually chooses Hotspur's respectability and Falstaff is left feeling abandoned. It is as though Hal's maturity is reflected in his rejection of Falstaff, who, in this sense, represents youth's irresponsibility.

Falstaff's association with youth's irresponsibility continues in *The Merry Wives*, where Falstaff himself finally realizes he must leave the ways of youth to the young--Fenton and Anne Page--and be admitted to adulthood.¹ This process involves his total humiliation in three sequences of events. The sequences are not tightly unified--the effect is almost like three short, separate plays--but the triple repetition gives the feeling of an initiation rite through which the irreverent knight must pass. This feeling is accentuated by Falstaff's being thrown into the river--reflecting many religious rites--and the full costumery and the magical/mystical ambiance of the final scene (in Windsor Park). After the final stage of the initiation, Falstaff is immediately accepted, as all the characters depart for a common meal over which to laugh about all the trickery. A full dramatic cycle can be seen here consisting of a three-part trial leading to final acceptance (triple conflict resolution).

The Merry Wives is not without its dramatic weaknesses. For one, it is overburdened with characters. Central to the action are Falstaff, Mistress Quickly, Ford and Page, Mistresses Ford and Page, Fenton and Anne Page, any one of Falstaff's self-indulgent attendants, and any one of Anne Page's

rival suitors. But instead we get not only these, but Shallow and Slender, who are very flat and even seem to be different sides of one character; Sir Hugh Evans, a Welsh parson who mainly exists so that Shakespeare can jibe at the Welsh, particularly in the school lesson scene with young William Page and Quickly (Act IV, 1); Dr. Caius, a French physician and suitor to Anne Page; the Host of the Garter Inn, who has a substantial part; Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym, Falstaff's cohorts; and various other servants and pages. Much of the effect of the play lies in the ganging up on "old John." Everyone is against him; he finds himself alone and "made an ass." But he still has enough wit to put the Welshman in his place. Even in *The Merry Wives*, Sir John cuts a pretty good figure; he always gets the last word.

So many characters, however, tend to confuse the action. Indeed, the play has been described in chaotic terms by some.² Perhaps the fact that it is in prose only contributes to the confusion. But, it might be argued, perhaps the confusion contributes to the humor. At any rate, several composers have deemed *The Merry Wives* worthy *buffa* material.

There had been operas based on the play previous to Verdi's.³ The earliest was *Le Vieux Coquet* by Papavoine, followed by works by Dittersdorf, Salieri, Balfe, and Nicolai--whose *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is still a popular opera with a popular overture. Nicolai's librettist was Mosenthal, who, of course, reduced the number of characters. Quickly, Evans, Shallow, Pistol, Bardolph, and Nym are discarded. The emphasis is on the wives, not on Falstaff; and it is upon the wives that the curtain rises. Much is made of the final (Windsor Park) scene where Nicolai's light Mendelssohnian music is so effective. (Most of the overture material comes from this scene.) Nicolai's opera had its premiere in 1849.

It was in 1889 that Verdi saw Boito's libretto, *Falstaff*. He was very pleased with it and, after discussing and setting aside his reservations concerning his age and health, began working. *Otello* (based on Shakespeare's *Othello*) had had its premiere in 1887 and Verdi was a national hero. He was becoming increasingly involved with humanitarian projects, such as financing a hospital in his home town and, later, making plans for a home for retired musicians. He consented to compose *Falstaff*, but at his own pace and under the condition that it be kept secret. The score was to have its premiere three and one-half years later, in February of 1893. The night of the first performance, Verdi was 79 years, 4 months old.

Boito's libretto represents a reduction and compression of Shakespeare. The number of characters is reduced to ten (not including Mrs. Ford's servants and Falstaff's page). Shallow, Slender, Page, William Page, Sir Hugh Evans, Nym, Robin, Simple, and Rugby are eliminated. Anne Page becomes Nannetta Ford. Shallow, Slender, Sir Hugh Evans, and Dr. Caius all seem to be compressed into a new Dr. Caius, who becomes a more rounded,

convincing character in Boito. Despite this reduction of characters, the feeling of everyone ganging up on "vecchio John" is not in the least impeded. The number of defeats for Falstaff is reduced from three to two; the trouncing of Falstaff with a cudgel by Ford as the knight was trying to escape in the garb of "the fat woman of Brentford" was mercifully spared him by Boito (Act IV, 2 of Shakespeare). With the elimination of Page, the jealousy element is mitigated because there is no one with whom Ford can be contrasted. (Shakespeare makes much of the contrast between the patient Page and the hot-tempered Ford.) Nevertheless, Boito succeeds in painting Ford as the jealous husband.

In the case of Falstaff and Mistress Quickly, however, Boito inherited rich characters from Shakespeare. In *The Merry Wives*, Quickly is the go-between for all of Anne Page's suitors. She also delivers the messages to and from Falstaff. She has the knowledge to control events. She can decide whom Anne Page is to marry. She can also decide when Sir John has had enough punishment. She greets Falstaff with obsequious regards and flatters and fools him three times. Verdi was to make the most out of this aspect of the drama with his "reverenza" theme.⁴

In Boito, Quickly does not play the go-between for Fenton and Dr. Caius in their pursuit of Nannetta Ford. Mistress Ford controls the marriage arrangements, although Quickly follows orders. Quickly's role in Boito is more concentrated as Falstaff's foil. She knows well all the lessons Sir John has to teach (for instance, on honor), but she is so much better at putting it all into practice. The abominous knight does not stand a chance against the combined onslaught of Quickly and Master Fontana (Ford in disguise).

And then there is Falstaff, himself, one of the great comic creations of all literature. The aging knight of the Order of the Garter tries to hang on to past glories--his youth, his chivalry--but, of course, cannot. He finds himself in a world that has passed him by. Prince Hal's rejection of Falstaff in the King Henry IV plays has already been mentioned. In *The Merry Wives*, Falstaff is rejected by everyone, quite peremptorily and without excuses. It is hard to imagine worse treatment. Although Sir John retains his wit, he is stripped of his dignity. (*Honi Soit Qui Mal y Pense.*)

Boito, however, puts Falstaff in a much better light. He does so by giving him material from the King Henry IV plays, such as the famous "honor soliloquy," from Act V, i of *I Henry IV*. Falstaff's homily ends (in Shakespeare) with; "Honor is a mere scutcheon; and so ends my catechism." Boito and Verdi had recently done a "credo" for Iago in *Otello*; now they were doing another kind of credo (a humorous one) for Falstaff. Through such interpolations, Boito restores Falstaff's dignity to a remarkable degree.

The ending of the opera was also reworked by Boito to Sir John's advantage. Falstaff aptly points out to his antagonists that it is only because of

his own wit that the others are able to appear so witty. Then he gets the satisfaction of asking Ford, when Ford's marriage plans for Nannetta and Dr. Caius are foiled, "Who's the dupe now?" Finally, it is Sir John who launches the final fugue--*tutto nel mondo è burla* --recalling the lines from Jacques's speech in *As You Like It*-- "all the world's a stage. . . ."

Formally, Boito compressed Shakespeare's five acts into three acts of two scenes each. The play is very appropriate for the kind of condensed stage action opera requires: much can be cut without disturbing the broad dramatic lines. One wonders if Boito felt as much (or more) poetic freedom with Shakespeare's prose in *The Merry Wives* as he had felt with Shakespeare's verse in *Othello*. At any rate, Boito's verse is very singable in *Falstaff*; it is remarkable how few were the number of changes suggested by the hypercritical, vocally astute Verdi.

Being a composer as well as a writer, Boito knew how to fashion his text for opera. He skillfully arranged for three "ensemble finales" to mark the ends of the three acts. At the end of Act I, all the plotters against Falstaff swear their vengeance in a *nonet*. Act II ends with everyone involved in the laundry basket escapade. Act III ends with the Windsor Park scene, everyone declaring the world a joke. Ensemble finales have been an *opera buffa* tradition since the time of Mozart. And although these are not Mozartian in musical structure, their intent (i.e., their suggestion of *buffa* tradition) is unmistakable.

Having dispensed with Shakespeare's triple conflict → resolution dramatic cycle, Boito substitutes a double conflict → resolution cycle. Falstaff is immersed in the river, then spooked in Windsor Park; the initiation is over and he is accepted. Boito telescopes this double conflict → resolution cycle in the first scene of the opera when Dr. Caius fails in his accusations against Falstaff, then fails in his accusations against Bardolfo and Pistola, accepts his failure and leaves, announcing the next time he gets drunk it will be with honest, sober, civilized, and pious people.⁵

Boito, however, was not only concerned with the broad dramatic lines. His eye was also on the details. Shakespeare's "between eleven and twelve" (as the hours of Ford's absence from his house) became *dalle due alle tre*. This became a recurring musical theme for Verdi. It is first spoken (sung) by Quickly in Act II, 1 and repeated twice by Falstaff. It is then repeated by Alice, Meg, and Quickly as they are preparing for Falstaff's entrance at Ford's house (Act II, 2).

Similarly, the various ways Quickly addresses Falstaff in Shakespeare (although always obsequiously) in Boito become *Reverenza*, another recurring musical theme for Verdi. It is, again, first introduced by Quickly, who sings it three times in Act II, 1. She repeats it in Act II, 2 when she is recalling her meeting with Sir John. She repeats it in Act III, 1 where she is

duping Falstaff for the second time. There is a new development this time as Verdi resolves to a V⁴/_{IV} chord and Quickly continues quickly. It is as if this time she has no time for formalities.⁶ Falstaff and Quickly sing it together in the final scene in mock imitation.⁷

Quickly also has the *povera donna* theme, which comes in close conjunction with the others mentioned above. The effect is very striking and humorous--Quickly sings the same song twice and Sir John is fooled both times.

It is no coincidence that Quickly introduces all of the recurring musical themes of the opera. Boito and Verdi, in contrast to Mosenthal and Nicolai, realized the importance of Quickly. In Boito, Quickly becomes focused in her relationship to Falstaff. Her opposition to Falstaff makes Falstaff's character clearer to us. Falstaff and Quickly are actually very much alike they are both conniving sharpers, although with different motives. They are different, however, in one important way; Falstaff is naive, Quickly is shrewd. Due to this contrast, Falstaff's naiveté is brought out clearly in Boito. Perhaps that is why he is so ingratiating despite himself.

It is a passage from *Il Henry IV* (Act I, ii) which Boito uses to protect Falstaff from ignominy in the last scene.⁸ After everyone has punished him and Falstaff admits he has been "made an ass" (a word set by Verdi to a falling minor sixth figure reminiscent of a donkey's chortle), he stops them all short with his *Ogni sorta di gente dozzinale*, which ends with Falstaff telling them, "My wit creates the wit of others," to which they all shout, "Ma bravo!" It is a wonderful moment in the opera. All accusations have been made, and it seems Falstaff has been thoroughly unmasked and confounded. The orchestra stops, as if even the musicians must hear what excuses he can offer now. But Falstaff collects himself, and with great strength of voice and character makes a defense which the others can only applaud.

Boito used Nannetta and Fenton as the young love motive, seemingly necessary to all Italian opera. He wrote to Verdi in July of 1889:

. . . This love-making between Nannetta and Fenton must appear suddenly, frequently; in all the scenes where they are present, they will steal kisses secretly in corners, slyly, boldly, without letting themselves be seen, with fresh little phrases and brief little dialogues, rapid and clever from the beginning to the end of the play; it will be a most lively and merry love, always disturbed and interrupted and always ready to begin again. . . I should like, as one sprinkles sugar on a cake, to sprinkle the whole comedy with that gay love, not collecting it all together at any one point. . . .⁹

In the final scene, there is a delightful additon--all Boito's--which is typically Italian. Bardolfo has just commanded Falstaff, "Reform your life!" The women pick up the theme of repentance in the form of a litany, which Verdi set to hymn-like music. For each petition they make--"Lord, make him

chaste," "Lord, shatter him;" "Lord, chastise him," "Make him repent, Lord"--Falstaff responds, "But save his abdomen! Meanwhile the men are still "pinching" and "stinging" him, singing in a rhythmic staccato between the longer *legato* phrases of the women and Falstaff. It is such a funny episode--particularly with the play on the Italian words "Domine" and "addomine."¹⁰

Boito wrote after the first performance: "Shakespeare's sparkling farce is led back by the miracle of sound to its clear Tuscan source" in Boccaccio. *Otello* and *Falstaff* represent the pinnacle of Italian tragic and comic opera. They are Italy's definitive "no" to German domination in music. Here, there are no high-flung theories of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, just human drama fashioned after the master of human drama, Shakespeare.

Much of what could be said about *Otello* from the musical standpoint could also be said of *Falstaff*. The most prominent difference in these last two Verdi operas, in contrast to the preceding ones, is the continuousness of the music. The parallel with Wagner is obvious here, although Verdi achieves his continuousness in a different way. Verdi's last two operas are no more symphonic in organization than the others have been, although the orchestra does assume a more important role. There is no polyphonic web of dramatically significant motives, as in Wagner. Still less does Verdi want to dispense with aria--even in *Otello* and *Falstaff* Verdi is a singer's composer. In comparison to Wagner's continuousness (which, by analogy, has the character of a single piece of material with shifting colors and textures) Verdi's has more the character of patchwork with very tightly sewn seams.

Nevertheless, these last two operas represent a departure from Verdi's earlier style. In *Otello* and *Falstaff*, Verdi has become the dramatist to a much greater degree. He seems to be much more aware of the fact that even in opera the action must move, the drama must be convincing. He is much more reluctant to let a singer stop and expound upon his or her feelings for several minutes as he has done for Violetta in *La Traviata* (*Sempre libera. . .*). When one compares Violetta's self-reflection to Falstaff's *Va vecchio John. . .*" (a five measure introduction, followed by a seventeen measure "aria," and a four measure codetta from the introductory material,¹¹ the differences in Verdi's dramatic attitude are obvious. This kind of emotional and musical compression is even more pronounced in *Falstaff* than in *Otello*. Another striking example of such compression occurs in Act I, 2 when Alice reads the last line of Falstaff's letter, *e il viso tuo su me risplendera. . .*. These five measures form a perfectly contoured Verdi "aria." Alice reads Falstaff's corny (and ambiguous) love line in utmost seriousness, and the effect is wonderful when it is broken off immediately by the laughter.¹²

Such typically Verdian tunes as Alice's really stand out in the predominantly *parlando* vocal style of *Falstaff*. This dramatic, declamatory style permeates *Falstaff* to a much greater degree than *Otello*, and contributes

to the tremendous pace of the opera (particularly the first two acts). Verdi, for the most part, retains the declamatory style even in places where he could have conceivably abandoned it--for instance, in Falstaff's long "honor soliloquy."¹³ Falstaff's lines are continually broken off, and there is very little to suggest traditional Italian *bel canto*. But where the music does become tuneful,¹⁴ the contrast is very effective. The wit with which Verdi comments upon Falstaff's homily--the "no" which follows every question, the *parola* which is only some air that floats away--is remarkable for anyone, but particularly for a 79-year-old composer.

The wit often takes on an air of self-mockery on Verdi's part. There are some autobiographical features in the opera. When Verdi sent the completed score to his publisher Ricordi, written on the first page in his own hand were Sir John's words, *va, vecchio John. . . Falstaff* was to be Verdi's farewell to the stage. And like Boito's Sir John, Verdi was leaving the stage with both dignity and wit. Some of the old Verdian formulae, such as a preponderance of third relationships and use of certain rhythmic devices, are retained in *Falstaff*. Frits Noske has traced a "death figure" through all the Verdi operas¹⁵--a figure which does occur in *Falstaff* to hilarious effect in the final scene when Sir John recognizes Bardolfo and launches an angry tirade against him. The music makes it clear that Falstaff is angry enough to kill the red-nosed sot. At the same time, it appears Verdi is jibing at his own device, used (as it is) in such absurd circumstances.¹⁶

Verdi's dramatic use of tonality throughout the opera is masterful. Basically, the work is in C, and whenever Falstaff is involved in the action the tonality is never far-removed from C (at least in terms of key signature). Different tonal areas are employed for dramatic effect. The main such effect pertains to Nannetta and Fenton, who are to be "sprinkled about" here and there. Verdi consistently uses the flat keys for the young lovers, which allows for Nannetta's long-held A-flat on the word *luna*. The effect is marvelous: throughout the opera, the young lovers seem to be in a world (a key) of their own. They are scarcely concerned about everyone else's activities--even about Falstaff's punishment, although they do take part in the fun. The first time Falstaff gets punished, however, they do not take part--they are only trying to sneak around and steal kisses. They do take part in the Windsor Park punishment, but here one has the feeling that the whole magical/mystical world evoked there is the proper world for Nannetta and Fenton. Indeed, it is the love *motive* of the drama which opens Act III, ii in the key of A-flat. Verdi uses this key relationship to marvelous effect in Act II, ii where the men overturn the screen and find not Alice and Falstaff, but Nannetta and Fenton. The sudden intrusion of the A-flat⁴ chord reflects the men's surprise and evokes the world of Nannetta and Fenton.¹⁷

In correspondence with Boito, Verdi had expressed concern about Act II,

ii being construed the climax of the opera and the whole of Act III, therefore, anti-climactic. The pace of Act II, ii is neck-breaking. Toward the beginning of the scene we find that the women are opposed to Ford's marriage plans for Nannetta and Dr. Caius. Then Falstaff comes in to seduce Alice and the fun starts. Alice puts off Sir John's advances long enough for Quickly to break in and announce that Meg is coming, who announces that Master Ford is coming, who does indeed come, along with Bardolfo, Pistola, Fenton, and Dr. Caius--all of whom are breathing vengeance on Falstaff, whom the women have hidden behind the screen. After Ford searches the laundry basket, the women stuff the corpulent knight into the basket and pile all the dirty linen on top of him. Alice exits to go call the servants. Nannetta and Fenton enter, comment on the madness, and sneak off behind the screen. The chaotic search for Falstaff continues. From behind the screen a kiss is suddenly heard. Ford believes it is Falstaff and Alice and starts making plans for the men to snatch the screen away and expose them. All this provides the appropriate madness for a wonderful *buffa* finale. Around (and in) the laundry basket are Quickly, Meg, and Falstaff; around the screen are Ford, Dr. Caius, Bardolfo, and Pistola; inside the screen are Nannetta and Fenton--nine singers, three sub-plots. The screen is overthrown (to the men's consternation). Alice then re-enters with the servants as the men resume their hunt for Falstaff. Then comes the grand climax as the women get the servants to dump basket, clothes, Falstaff, and all out the window into the river. Alice retrieves Ford, who sees the spectacle down below.

In view of this excellent *buffa* material, Verdi's fears about the third act were understandable. At the end of Act II, Falstaff has been thoroughly punished and Ford's jealousy has been resolved. There are, however, a couple of items left unresolved. One is the love story. Another is the fact that although Falstaff has, indeed, been punished, he does not understand what has happened.

Verdi opens the third act with the same orchestral material he had used in Act II, ii for Quickly's entrance, after which the action really begins to roll. But in the introduction to Act III, the orchestra whips up this material into a fury. It reflects Falstaff's anger over his maltreatment, but (from its prior use) we also become almost imperceptibly aware that Sir John is going to get it again--but good. Falstaff then sings his self-pitying monologue, which becomes more cheerful as the wine he is drinking takes effect. The orchestral trills¹⁹ reflect the "thrill" of the wine pervading the whole world (and the enormity of Falstaff's body). Quickly then comes in and sets Falstaff up for the Windsor Park scene, while the others comment from a distance.

The placement of the orchestral prelude (the only one of the opera) and Falstaff's monologue is strategic. Verdi and Boito first resort to purely musical stratagems to hold our interest, then give us the pure pleasure of a

humiliated, self-pitying Falstaff, who can nevertheless--in spite of everything--take refuge in sack. The rapid dramatic pace of Act II, ii is thus relieved in Act III. Act III, i is mainly a setting of the stage, a gathering of the forces, for the Windsor Park scene.

The Windsor Park scene, of course, resolves the various sub-plots. Nannetta and Fenton are married, and Falstaff discovers the plot against him and repents. After the mix-up with the marriages, the whole world is declared a joke and so ends the opera. This scene is charming in its evocation of fairies and legends. Boito and Verdi were wise not to try to repeat the frantic pace of Act II, ii. Instead, they decided to take us to another world, a fanciful world providing wonderful opportunities for creative staging. Although the pace is slower, Falstaff's punishment is just as severe. He is pricked and kicked by all the "fairies," forced to admit that he is the one with the "horns," and made to repent. It is interesting to observe that the handling of pace in *Falstaff* is much the same as in *Otello*, which also slows down considerably for the final act.

The closing fugue¹⁹ makes a fine finale. The only lessons we can learn from *Falstaff* are *Tutto nel mondo è burla* and *Tutti gabbati*. But these rather dubious maxims are set to a most learned type of musical composition--fugue. Again, the irony between text and music is very humorous. The fugue was actually the first thing Verdi wrote for *Falstaff*; in fact, it generates much of the melodic material that is used throughout the opera. Quickly's *dalle due alle tre* and "reverenza" themes bear close resemblance to the fugue subject.

In many ways, *Falstaff* is an enigma. Why would the great tragic composer--with only one previous comedy, *Un Giorno di Regina* (53 years before), in his oeuvre--decide to end his career with a *Falstaff*? And why, all of a sudden, in his last opera does Verdi so radically compress his musical language?

One must also wonder: what the effect was of Boito, the former Wagnerian, upon Verdi? Boito had proved himself a composer of merit with *Mefistofele* of 1868, although that is his only completed work. The relationship between Verdi and Boito had once been on shaky ground, but at the end they were certainly on friendly terms. One wonders if the younger Boito could have influenced Verdi's musical style in *Falstaff* (and *Otello*, for that matter). To say he did would in no way be disparaging to Verdi, who, after all, had a hand in the libretto.

Falstaff, of course, was a guaranteed success at its premiere. That first year there were eight more performances in eight different cities, one of which was given in German and another in Czech. But *Falstaff* has not held the stage like *Otello*, *Aida* (1874), *La Traviata* (1853), or *Rigoletto* (1851). In spite of its civilized set, its entertaining characterizations, and its effective and superbly constructed music, *Falstaff* has not been all that popular. Why? Is it

esoteric? (How could Sir John Falstaff be esoteric!?) Is it not melodious enough? (But the opera seems to many as "one continuous melody.") To answer all these questions would be to speculate, but the questions are straight to the point: just what are we to make of this opera? So many of the circumstances surrounding it are puzzling.

At any rate, *Falstaff* is an amazing achievement. The 79-year-old Verdi, composer of tragedies, had put the final touch on the great Italian *buffa* tradition--a tradition that included such great composers as Mozart and Rossini. He thereby reasserted not only his own genius, but also reaffirmed Shakespeare's.

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Notes

- ¹Daniel Sabbeth, "A Musico/Dramatic Analysis of *Falstaff*." *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Verdiani* (Parma, 1976).
- ²Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Verdi* (London, 1973), pp. 477-78.
- ³Phyllis Hartnoll (ed.), *Shakespeare in Music* (New York, 1966), pp. 120, ff.
- ⁴See Kalmus full orchestral score, p. 140.
- ⁵Sabbeth, "A Musico/Dramatic Analysis of *Falstaff*."
- ⁶Kalmus full score, p. 322.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, p. 421.
- ⁸Hartnoll, *Shakespeare in Music*, pp. 124-25.
- ⁹William Weaver (ed.), *Verdi: A Documentary Study* (London, 1977), p. 245.
- ¹⁰Kalmus full score, p. 409.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 151.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, p. 72.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 47, ff.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 48, system 2, bar 3.
- ¹⁵Frits Noske, *The Signifier and the Signified: Studies in the Operas of Mozart and Verdi* (The Hague, 1977), pp. 171-214.
- ¹⁶Kalmus full score, p. 417.
- ¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 295.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 321-22.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 438, ff.

ON RE-INTERPRETING *HENRY V* by David Collins

Henry V has long been troublesome for critics who have approached it from the traditional perspective suggested by the phrase "history play." Harley Granville-Barker, M. M. Reese, and Rose A. Zimbaro all share the opinion that, as a political piece, the play is undramatic and lacking in conflict. To Granville-Barker the play is "lifeless" because it is lacking in "some dramatically significant and fruitful idea"; to Reese it is "in the main a demonstration . . . the hero is no longer in the toils"; and to Zimbaro the whole appears "full of warfare, yet empty of conflict" and "embraces a courtship but never exploits the tensions inherent in love."¹ E. M. W. Tillyard has observed that as king, Henry is "utterly inconsistent with his old self"; the fundamental detachment and the persistent irony which marked Hal as a prince disappear when he dons the crown. In view of such "lapses," Tillyard concludes that *Henry V* was "constructed without intensity."²

Though the enduring success of Olivier's highly political version of *Henry V* suggests that these estimates are exaggerated, some such flattening is inevitable if the play is conceived of merely as the celebration of a public figure who embodies the national destiny. But as Ernst H. Kantorowicz has reminded us by reference to the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies, Shakespeare's *Henry V* is considerably more complex. Before the battle of Agincourt he laments the fact that he is "twin-born with greatness," a Christ-like man of sorrows whose dual nature causes him to suffer more of "mortal griefs" than his worshippers. The Elizabethan source of the doctrine of the King's Two Bodies is, of course, Plowden's commentary on the famous *Case of the Duchy of Lancaster* (1561):

For the King has in him two Bodies, *viz.*, a Body natural, and a Body politic. His Body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a Body mortal, subject to all Infirmities that come by Nature or Accident . . . But his Body politic is a Body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of Policy and Government, and constituted for the Direction of the People, and the Management of the public weal, and this Body is utterly void of Infancy, and old Age, and other natural Defects and Imbecilities, which the Body natural is subject to, and for this Cause, what the King does in his Body politic, cannot be invalidated or frustrated by any Disability in his natural Body.³

In applying this principle to an analysis of *Richard II*, Kantorowicz achieves a remarkable balance. What emerges is not just a study of the legal fictions surrounding Tudor kingship but a humanly revealing study of a man who struggles unsuccessfully to reconcile the two parts of his self, the "Body politic" and the "Body natural." Unfortunately, he says very little of *Henry V*.

And beyond Kantorowicz the concern of the critics lies primarily with a *king* who is "also" a man and with the particular and limited problems of the "Body politic" with which he must deal in his official capacity. Scant attention is given to the *man* who is king or to the problems of more universal nature which might be made more acute by the accident of his position at the head of society.

Much of the difficulty which surrounds the interpretation of *Henry V* can be traced indirectly to this problem of classification, for as Harold Tolliver has pointed out, there is an unmistakable correlation between our response to character and our conception of form.⁴ The term "history play" is somewhat misleading in that it predisposes the modern reader to conceive of character and action only in terms of their relation to the state. But the term is an unnecessary encumbrance. Irving Ribner has noted that the Elizabethans "generally distinguished between tragedy and comedy and that they admitted a third form, tragi-comedy," but apart from a solitary reference in the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* he cannot discern any evidence "that they made any distinction between tragedy and history as dramatic forms."⁵ Moreover, an examination of the title pages of the quartos suggests that the terms "history" and "tragedy" were applied rather liberally by Shakespeare and his contemporaries. *Richard II* is, for example, *The Tragedie of King Richard the Second*; *King Lear* becomes the *True Chronicle Historie of the life and death of King Lear and his three daughters*. Clearly, none of the traditional designations is sufficiently precise to be of any use as an infallible interpretational guideline. Eugene Waith has summed up the problem handily:

Full justice cannot be done to the *Richard II--Henry V* tetralogy without introducing other concepts than the retribution for Henry IV's sin of usurpation, nor do the political lessons implied in the parallels to contemporary events account adequately for the themes of these plays.⁶

The political interpretations suggested by Tillyard, Campbell, and a host of others (and brought to the stage by Olivier) do serve to illuminate one meaningful pattern in *Henry V*, but no single perspective, whether defined by politics or any other limited area of human concern, can convey in sufficient depth the play's expression of the complexities of the human condition.

Henry V reveals a Shakespeare poised artistically between two worlds, one dying, the other not yet born. Passing from the scene is the wide angle, panoramic view of man most closely associated with the first history tetralogy where conflicts are primarily external and on a grand scale; just coming into focus, however indistinctly as yet, is the close-up with its emphasis on a singular individual who, though he may have external conflicts enough,

struggles primarily to know and understand his self. In *Henry V* it is the tension generated by the conflict between the ruler's impersonality and the individual's need for self-assertion that constitutes the human interest we are drawn to today. In *I and II Henry IV* Prince Hal faced the task of finding a *modus operandi* in a world that made impossibly contradictory demands upon him as at once a public and a private figure.⁷ This same conflict is extended into *Henry V*. In the person of the king we are set to consider the various responses to the demands of royalty upon a character who must exist in a human as well as a political dimension, and the play succeeds insofar as Shakespeare insures the dominance of the individual.

To the extent that Shakespeare does insure the dominance of the individual, Tillyard long ago provided the clue. In accord with his political premises, Tillyard assumes that in *Henry V* Shakespeare was attempting to create an English epic. But, since the Tudors did not embody any great political principle and thus fell short of the epic standard, "Shakespeare for his hero was obliged ultimately to choose *homo* not *rex*." It is in fact the concept of *man* as king, not *king* as man, which lies at the center of *Henry V* and makes possible its success with contemporary audiences. The resultant mode is hardly epic. In a few paragraphs appended to that section of *Shakespeare's History Plays* which deals with *Henry V*, Tillyard cites Henry's reprimand of Scroop in order that he may condemn it for its inconsistency with the rest of the play:

May it be possible that foreign hire
 Could out of thee extract one spark of evil
 That might annoy my finger? 'Tis so strange,
 That, though the truth of it stands off as gross
 As black and white, my eye will scarcely see it.

(II.ii.100-4)⁸

As Tillyard concedes, this speech introduces a tragic note, an awareness of the gap between appearance and reality which will later plague Shakespeare's tragic heroes. He feels, however, that it is alien to the matter of the play because it has little to do "with politics, with patterns of history, with ancestral curses, with England's destiny and all the order of her society. It is a personal and not a public theme."⁹ This is, of course, precisely the point. In *Henry V* Shakespeare humanizes events which other playwrights present merely as colorful segments of history. The continuing popularity of *Henry V* both on the stage and in the study does not lie in the exposition of political themes which have long since lost their immediate appeal to audiences. Kantorowicz himself noted that Shakespeare was not interested in "the legal capacities which English lawyers assembled in the fiction of the King's Two Bodies" but in "the humanly tragic aspect of royal 'germination'" implicit in the doctrine.¹⁰ Though we are not today concerned with "royal

'germination,'" ours in an age in which the mass media have largely opened up the private lives of our leaders and we are able to watch them struggling with the sometimes overwhelming demands of office. Shakespeare's study of the tragic potential in a public figure, however imperfectly it may be done, seems particularly up-to-date.

In fact, *Henry V* does not so much turn to the exploration of matters potentially tragic as it returns to the same. The intimation of tragedy that Tillyard first detects in Henry's reprimand of Scroop is by no means unique in the plays usually referred to as the second history tetralogy. As early as *Richard II* Shakespeare introduces the dilemma of a man who must reconcile the public and private demands of his self and, hence, comes painfully to confront the problems which attend "the hollow crown/That rounds the mortal temples of a king" (III.ii.160-1). In a recent study of *I and II Henry IV*, significantly entitled "Prince Hal and Tragic Style," Daniel Seltzer suggests that although Hal is not ultimately a tragic hero "the depths of the character correspond in interesting ways to the depths which the center of tragic focus must achieve."¹¹ The *Henry IV* plays do, as has often been asserted, deal with the education of a prince, but Hal's education therein encompasses more than the arts of war and of the council, the public arts of kingship. Prince Hal is, as Seltzer has observed, a young man with "such an inwardly oriented *raison d'être*" that he cannot yet understand himself, a "man in flux" trying to come to terms with himself.¹² The pain of Hal's experience as he reluctantly prepares to "pay the debt [he] never promised" (I.i.209) is in part kept at bay by his penchant for practical jokes, but it repeatedly pushes to the surface in such moments as Hal's successive reconciliations with his father, his interview with Poin as his father lies dying, and the rejection of Falstaff. All of this does not cease, but rather comes to a head in *Henry V*.

For the student of Shakespeare who would understand the tragic potential of Henry V's character, the incident at Southampton is crucial. It serves to focus our attention on Henry's reaction to the collapse of his comfortable world view and his resultant attitude toward responsibility. The king's treatment of the conspirators is a practical joke of the kind Prince Hal might have laid on Falstaff or Francis. It provides a momentary diversion for an uneasy king, a means of temporarily masking the grim seriousness of the situation. Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey have betrayed the king and their treachery is known only to the king and to several of his councilors. How little their deception is reflected in their outward demeanor has particularly impressed the Earl of Westmoreland:

How smooth and even they do bear themselves!
As if allegiance in their bosoms sate
Crowned with faith and constant loyalty.

(II.ii.3-5)

But the false front they put on is no more deceptive than the protective mask the king adopts. By pretending to be ignorant of their designs and by asking each of the conspirators to speak his thoughts, Henry compounds the irony of the situation. Scroop maintains that he has no doubts the French wars will succeed, Cambridge that there is not an unhappy subject in all of England, and Grey that even former enemies have been converted. Moments later, by deliberately releasing a soldier guilty of a minor offense, Henry causes the three to discourage mercy and, thus, to condemn themselves. The substitution of warrants of execution for the expected commissions is the final irony, a practical joke by which Henry attempts to disguise his displeasure at being forced in an official capacity to act in a way repugnant to his private self. Henry is, in the words of Marilyn Williamson, "still learning to be a king" and is "a more complex and interesting character than we have thought."¹³

It is, however, impossible for Henry to contain entirely his reaction to the betrayal. The deception of Lord Scroop in particular, "the man that was his bedfellow,/Whom he hath dull'd and cloy'd with gracious favors" (II.ii.8-9), causes the king a great deal of anguish. His first reaction is disbelief, and his reproof of Scroop indicates the extent of his shock. Most vice, according to the king, comes disguised as virtue, or is at least sweetened by some substantial reward. But for this treason there is no such excuse. Henry's incredulity quickly turns to disillusionment. From the nature of his questions we can infer that the shock has caused him to question the very premises of society as he has come to know it:

Show meh dutiful?

Why, so didst thou. Seem they grave and learned?

Why, so didst thou. Come they of noble family?

Why, so didst thou. Seem they religious?

Why, so didst thou. Or are they spare in diet,

Free from gross passion, or of mirth or anger,

Constant in spirit, not swerving with the blood,

Garnish'd and deck'd in modest complement,

Not working with the eye without the ear,

And but in purged judgment trusting neither?

Such and so finely bolted didst thou seem.

(II.ii.127-37)

Although the warrants have been deliberately prepared earlier, the full emotional impact of this incident does not become apparent to Henry until he confronts the men he had formerly trusted. For what is perhaps the first time, he realizes that the gap between appearance and reality can easily be turned against him. The incredible contradiction of "seeming" which Henry confronts here looks forward to such plays as *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. It adds to *Henry V* a dimension unknown in earlier plays.

To the young king still uneasy in his role ("This new and gorgeous garment majesty,/Sits not so easy on me as you think" [V.ii.44-5]), the significance of this discovery goes beyond the mere political—it has cosmic implications. Still addressing Scroop, Henry compares the event to the archetypal first sin:

And thus thy fall hath left a kind of blot
To mark the full-fraught man and best indued
With some suspicion. I will weep for thee;
For this revolt of thine, methinks, is like
Another fall of man.

(II.ii.138-42)

Seen from such a perspective, the world can never again be the same. However desperately the "Body natural" longs for the simple perspective of the private man, as head of the "Body politic" Henry is set apart, alienated, because even the best and most trustworthy of his friends are now "indued with some suspicion." His is a difficult position with which our own age has made us only too familiar. The tragic disillusionment he comes to feel as a result of this scene is not a note foreign to the play; it is the culmination of his education in the confusion of appearance and reality. With the knowledge that the two are often inalterably opposed, yet still indistinguishable, action becomes more difficult. Henceforth, Henry must live with the realization that each of his actions, however carefully considered, is ultimately based upon a single perspective not inclusive in its view. In the complex world thus engendered there can be no guarantee of moral rectitude. As a result, Henry, a man perhaps more stubbornly resistant to moral influence than other less complex individuals, yet too conscious of moral implications to be wholly callous, finds it increasingly difficult to accept responsibility. "Shakespeare grasps," as Robert Heilman has observed in a study of Macbeth as a tragic hero, "the human lust for pure, insentient action"¹⁴ and he develops the character of Henry V accordingly. Like the tragic heroes who will follow him, Henry seeks desperately to evade discomfiting self-knowledge and to ease the burden on himself; he consistently takes refuge in "the narcotic of action," shifting the moral obligation to others.¹⁵

Evasive action begins as early as the first scene of the play where we are introduced to the king's problem in seeking justification for his proposed invasion of France. Because his experience as the son of a guilty father has made him sensitive to moral implications, Henry cannot, without a single-minded perspective, order the invasion. Its political necessity was made clear by his father's dying advice "to busy giddy minds/With foreign quarrels" (IV.v.213-4). But political necessity no longer seems sufficient. Alone, he is unwilling to bear the full burden of the matter and he calls upon his spiritual advisors: "We would," he tells them, "be resolv'd. . . of some things of

weight/That task our thoughts" (I.ii.4-6). According to M. M. Reese, "on a matter of this gravity this was the correct thing to do," and Reese believes it to be "ironical that Henry's critics should have regarded it as a brazen invitation to the clergy to consecrate commotion's bitter edge."¹⁶ If the clergy were brought into the play only to ratify Henry's decision, how are we to explain the significance of Bullingbrook's dying counsel in *II Henry IV*? Why does Shakespeare prepare for the scene between Henry and his spiritual advisors by showing a dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Ely in which they make it clear that Henry, by threatening the sequestration of Church property, can force the Church to act as he would wish? A closer examination of the manner in which Henry charges the clergy is in order.

It is true that the king's first injunction demands an impartial opinion and warns against falsifying the information in any way:

My learned lord, we pray you to proceed,
 And justly and religiously unfold
 Why the law Salique, that they have in France,
 Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim;
 And God forbid, my dear and faithful lord,
 That you should fashion, wrest, or bow your reading,
 Or nicely charge your understanding soul
 With opening titles miscreate, whose right
 Suits not in native colors with the truth.

(I.ii.9-17)

But as he proceeds, he makes his own disposition known by the tone of his speech. There is no doubt in his mind that the bishops will decide that his war is moral:

For God doth know how many now in health
Shall drop their blood in approbation
 Of what your reverence *shall* incite us to.
 Therefore take heed *how* you impawn our person,
How you awake our sleeping sword of war.

(I.ii.18-22; Italics added)

It is not, with Henry, so much a question of "if," as "how." The final words of his charge tell us what the king really expects of the assembled clergy:

For we will hear, note, and believe in heart,
 That what you speak is in your conscience wash'd
 As pure as sin with baptism.

(I.ii.30-2)

Henry wants the clergy to wash with baptism the sin of a war he cannot justify morally; he wants to place responsibility for the attendant slaughter on the shoulders of those who decide upon the applicability of the "law Salique."

In this Canterbury is, of course, most obliging. The argument which he

To further insulate himself from responsibility, Henry ignores the sequence of his actions and imputes his decision either to rule or to devastate France to the Dauphin's childish joke rather than to his own dynastic impulses.¹⁹

Events at Southampton evoke yet another nervous attempt to evade responsibility. Henry cleverly arranges to have Cambridge, Scroop, and Grey to condemn mercy for even the most minor offenses and then reveals that he is aware of the plot they have set afoot. Yet although he has personally made it impossible for the conspirators to receive anything but the most severe penalty, the king refuses to be held accountable for their sentence:

Touching our person seek we no revenge,
But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,
Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws
We do deliver you.

(II.ii.174-7)

It is the law, not Henry, that demands their execution. Before Harfleur Henry structures the moral situation in the same way. Henry V of England has brought unsought-for war to France, but if Harfleur refuses to capitulate, Henry warns that the town will be reduced to rubble, the women raped, and the general population slaughtered--and he asserts that because the French are "guilty in defense" they and the rough English soldiery, not the English king, will be responsible. Even Henry's pious utterances on the morning of the battle of Agincourt are overshadowed by his compulsion to evade responsibility. Recalling the "by-paths and indirect crook'd ways" by which his father came to be king, Henry attempts to pray:

Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!

(IV.i.292-4)

But his prayer lacks the humility of the repentant sinner standing before God. There is no indication that the thought of giving up the crown his father usurped ever enters Henry's mind. In reality he is interested only in making excuses for himself, and he carefully recites the steps which he has taken to make amends for the admitted fault upon his father's part:

I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears,
Than from it issued forced drops of blood.
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a day their wither'd hands hold up
Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Still sing for Richard's soul.

(IV.i.295-302)

His reasoning is pharisaic. He points out only the good he has done, ignoring insofar as possible his continuing malaise in keeping and enjoying an illgotten crown while remaining perfectly content to place all blame for associated evils on his father.

Because he refuses so consistently to accept responsibility, Henry has appeared to some of his critics as a moral coward. That he is no such thing is perhaps easier for those of us living in the second half of the twentieth-century to understand. Only by recognizing the deep-seated ambivalence which plagues the king, a "modern" problem, can we hope to sympathize with Henry. His discovery at Southampton of the gap between appearance and reality significantly alters his concept of the moral universe, and the period of his adjustment is painful indeed. Like Hamlet, Othello, Lear, and Macbeth, the tragic figures for whom he is in a very real way an early study, Henry V "has the capacity for knowing [himself], but he has also other desires and needs that stand between him and what he can know." It is the duty of the king to act quickly and decisively for the good of the kingdom, and "purpose," as Heilman has suggested, "needs ignorance."²⁰ Hence, the king's reluctance to come to terms with himself and his responsibilities. Were he to yield to the demands of the "Body natural" he could not be an effective king.

In only one scene, the much discussed "little touch of Harry in the night," does Henry relax the impassive facade of the public man to reveal the internal conflict spurred by his earlier realization that any action based upon a "one-eyed" perspective will almost invariably be inadequate as a response to his problems. Urged by Sir Thomas Erpingham to accept company on his nocturnal patrol, the king replies in such a manner as to demonstrate that he is no less troubled than when the French wars were first proposed: "I and my bosom must debate awhile./And then I would no other company" (IV.i.31-2). But contrary to his desires, on this, his second visit to the troops, Henry does find company in the night--contentious company that forces him to face questions he has been evading for some time.²¹

His first several encounters provide positive reinforcement for the French wars and some solace for his troubled mind. From Pistol Henry learns of the unrefined affection with which much of the English camp regards that "lovely bully," their king. From the overheard conversation of Fluellen and Gower he is able to form an estimate of the simple valor with which his army will defend his cause. But after these preliminary skirmishes with Pistol and with Fluellen and Gower, Henry confronts three disarmingly simple soldiers, John Bates, Alexander Court, and Michael Williams. Because the problem of self-definition is heavy upon his mind, it is not long before Henry, speaking incognito, voices his opinion of the king for the benefit of the soliders:

I think the king is but a man, as I am. The violet smells to him as it doth to me; the element shows to him as it doth to me; all his senses have but human conditions. His ceremonies laid by, in his nakedness he appears but a man; and though his affections are higher mounted than ours, yet when they stoop, they stoop with the like wing. . . .

(IV.i.101-7)

Although Henry's speech is a long way from the more eloquent utterances later offered by Hamlet on man and by Lear on kingship, we see here in a context less fully developed much the same interrogative attitude about the nature of man. Try as he might to avoid such knowledge, Henry is yet aware of what the injunction "Know Thyself" means as Sir Thomas Elyot applied it in *The Governor*:

If thou be a governor, or hast over other sovereignty, know thyself,

that is to say, know that all other men be equal unto thee. Also that every man taketh with thee equal benefit of the spirit of life, nor hast thou any more of the dew of heaven, or the brightness of the sun, than any other person. Thy dignity or authority wherein thou only differest from other is (as it were) but a weighty cloak, freshly glittering in the eyes of them that be purblind, where unto thee it is painful, if thou wear him in his right fashion, and as it shall best become thee.²²

Significantly, the metaphor Elyot uses to draw attention to the superficiality of that which distinguishes a king from other men, the "weighty or heavy cloak" which is "painful" if worn properly, is the very metaphor the newly crowned Henry V employs to express his own malaise at the end of *II Henry IV*. Henry clearly recognizes that the ultimate value of human life lies not in "seeming" to be a king or anything more than a *man*, but simply in exercising the limited powers of man to confront as best he can whatever vicissitudes might arise. Like Richard II and Henry IV before him, though perhaps with more self-conscious reluctance than either, Henry V has learned that all of humanity cannot be embraced within the public image.

Yet in the argument with Bates and Williams which follows, Henry again recoils from responsibility. Discussing the question of individual responsibility in war, Bates asserts the orthodox Tudor position that "If his [the king's] cause be wrong, our obedience to the King wipes the crime of it out of us," and Williams adds the still more damaging assertion that "if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make" (IV.i.132.5). In the succeeding passage, Williams explains that the king must be held to account for the lives of all he has induced to fight for him in an immoral cause. Henry, who has been able publicly to justify the invasion of France, but who is too aware of the ambiguity which surrounds the human condition ever to be absolutely certain of any matter, is troubled because he

has not yet been able to satisfy his own conscience on the question of responsibility. Placed on the defensive, Henry quickly rebuts the argument, but he does so with a series of false analogies. His apologia is not at all convincing. The proposition against which he successfully defends himself is that the king need not answer for the private sins of those who die in battle. The more pressing question he side-steps. Henry is able to evade obvious defeat because he is the better rhetorician, not because he clearly demonstrates the truth of his argument.

In the company of the three soldiers, Henry maintains his equilibrium and stubbornly refuses to acknowledge how far a king is responsible for the effects of even his most random acts. But left to himself for a moment, he reveals that the arguments advanced by Bates and Williams have affected him profoundly. Although he would flee from it, Henry is at least aware of the extensive responsibilities which are his in the capacity of king and which he would be spared were he but a private man:

Upon the King! Let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children, and our sins lay on the King!
We must bear all. O hard condition,
Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
Of every fool whose sense no more can feel
But his own wringing! What infinite heart's ease
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!

(IV.i.230-7)

In the continuation of his soliloquy, an examination of the "idol ceremony" that separates him from "private man," Henry shows himself to be capable of mature reflection on the nature of kingship. Like Gaunt before him, Henry realizes that ceremony is empty because it lacks the power to heal and restore; and like Lear who will follow, Henry can refer to ceremony as a "proud dream" which serves for a time to hide the "unaccommodated man," "the poor, bare, fork'd animal." The envious lines in which Henry describes the peasant who

with a body fill'd and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread,
Never sees horrid night, the child of hell;
But like a lackey, from the rise to set,
Sweats in the eye of Phoebus, and all night
Sleeps in Elysium. . . .

(IV.i.269-74)

reveal a tortured mind similar to that of Bullingbrook just before his death. These are not the political speculations of a scheming politician but the moral considerations of a *man*, a private individual who is "also" a king. As Leonard Dean has observed, the issues raised by Bates and Williams force the play out of the realm of heroic drama and into the domain of the ironic problem play.²³

Even the joke which Henry contrives to catch Williams has its serious implications. When the trick is exposed, Williams has but one defense:

Your Majesty came not like yourself. You appear'd to me as a common man; witness the night, your garments, your lowliness; and what your Highness suffer'd under that shape, I beseech you take it for your own fault and not mine; for had you been as I took you for, I made no offense; therefore I beseech your Highness pardon me.

(IV.viii.50-6)

Without the ceremony which usually attends his person, Henry appears as a commoner, a subtle comment upon the depth of such ceremony. Yet try as he might to be only a man like his soldiers, Henry can never achieve so much. To be a man lies within the realm of possibility; to be a man like his soldiers does not. Henry is *king* and, though he can never synthesize the "Body politic" and the "Body natural" within him, neither can he for a long time ignore either aspect. Kingship calls for a greater man, a man capable of great pain and sacrifice, and it is this man that Henry must continually strive to become.

Paradoxically, *Henry V* most succeeds where one might expect it most to fail--in the apparent contradiction between the pattern of public success and the equally prominent pattern of private failure. That the man who succeeds so dramatically as a military leader, as lover, and as king should yet fail to reconcile the halves of his divided self creates a tension which causes us to become aware of Henry as a Shakespearean creation struggling to emerge from the limited role forced upon him by the accident of his success in Shakespeare's sources. Henry V is not Hamlet, but neither is he the hero king of popular tradition; rather, he is a transitional figure making his way between the two poles. In *Henry V* the glorious king drawn from the chronicles undergoes a metamorphosis and is humanized, emerging in Shakespeare's vision as a man with a conscience desirous of knowing his self and fulfilling. . .its potential, but also realizing that the strengths of the individual are in fact the weaknesses of a king.

To be a successful king, Henry must be free to act, and to do so he must block out the ambivalence introduced by his awareness that his self, like all things else, is dichotomous, neither the public nor the private side being completely justified in its demands. He must in other words limit his awareness lest he become enmeshed in a fruitless dialogue between claim and counterclaim which would consume the energy the king must translate immediately into action. In *Henry V* the king is forced to limit himself; he comes of age politically, but his political maturation is paralleled by, and indeed may virtually be defined in terms of, his growing alienation from his fellow man. In *I* and *II Henry IV* Hal had learned something of the value of time in the affairs of men, but "Now he weighs time/Even to the utmost grain" (II.iv.137-8), carrying a potential virtue to a degree more--or less--

human. To facilitate action during the siege of Harfleur, Henry ignores the complexity of his being and conceives of himself only as "a soldier,/A name that in my thoughts becomes me best" (III.iii.5-6). Again in the wooing scene, Henry simplifies the situation by presenting only one aspect of his self-image: "Take me, take a soldier; take a soldier, take a king" (V.ii.165-6). By doing so he avoids the complications inherent in a full presentation of his character and quickly advances the action. He does so, however, at the cost of arresting the full development of his humanity. To imagine that he is able to act thus without pain is to go against the evidence presented by Henry in his soliloquy "Upon the King." The somber note sounded by the last chorus, which seems to direct attention away from the all-victorious Henry V, comes as no surprise to those who have attentively watched Henry struggling to satisfy at once the opposite but equally valid demands of the "Body politic" and the "Body natural."

Far from being a play "constructed without intensity" and lacking in "some dramatically significant and fruitful idea," *Henry V* is carefully constructed around the reactions of Henry as he raises the dichotomous "public-private" nature of the self and the widening gap between appearance and reality to a conscious level in order to address himself directly to the tragic problem they present. That gap and that dichotomy are so great, and have existed for so long, that no man can resolve them. Shakespeare's Henry V can be sure of nothing and, when he attempts to come to know himself in the context of such a milieu, his position is thereby made all the more difficult. He must struggle, alone in the face of a seemingly incomprehensible universe, to master at least his own being, and he can only do so by exposure to life, an element potentially destructive because of the dangers inherent in the gap between appearance and reality. The whole self can only be fully experienced when both opposing sides are maintained simultaneously. Attempting to do so, Henry realizes that he is a *king* and that he is a *man*, but that he is wholly neither. His is a picture of a man face to face with himself, face to face not with a fact, but with an implicit question: "Who, what am I?" His question looks forward to the more explicit questions of Hamlet and Lear. Here as later there can be no answer beyond the noncommittal "He who asks." There can be no static notion of self because in such a construct self-knowledge is not a condition, but a continuing process. Henry can find his identity only in the quest as he learns to deal with the double terrible emptiness within. That he should learn to recognize the opacity of his world, and that he should attempt to continue his work in spite of the difficulties, is an element which at once adds a tragic overtone to Henry's character and ultimately defines him as less than tragic.

Henry V's knowledge of the human condition is far superior to that of the other kings in Shakespeare's "history plays." Like an embryonic Hamlet,

and like Nietzsche's Dionysiac man, Henry V has achieved a position of superior knowledge with respect to the moral universe; and he shares to a limited extent in the problems Nietzsche ascribes to such a position:

Both have looked deeply into the true nature of things, they have understood and are now loath to act. They realize that no action of theirs can work any change in the eternal condition of things and they regard the imputation as ludicrous or debasing that they should set right the time which is out of joint. Understanding kills action, for in order to act we need a veil of illusion. . . . The truth once seen, man is aware everywhere of the ghastly absurdity of existence, comprehends the symbolism of Ophelia's fate and the wisdom of the wood sprite Silenus: nausea invades him.²⁴

Henry V has gone beyond the illusion to the reality. But Henry V, though he does suffer in the face of reality, does not succumb to the nausea; he continues to act and in so doing separates himself from Shakespeare's more fully developed tragic heroes. Knowing full well that every action is damning because it can satisfy only one part of his nature and must consequently frustrate the other, Henry overcomes the potential paralysis and continues "to reconcile and maintain," his chosen vocation.

The nature of the world in which he lives, and his growing understanding thereof, suggest a tragic denouement for Henry. *Richard II* is tragic because, as Kantorowicz has pointed out, "the fiction of the oneness of the double body breaks apart."⁴⁶ The "Body natural" gains control, steering an egotistically satisfying but self-destructive course. It is a situation we commonly recognize as tragic. *Henry V* is in a sense just the opposite. Though the balance is more nearly even, the King's Two Bodies again break apart--but this time it is the "Body politic" which gains control. Yet the problem is essentially the same: the self cannot be integrated, a part must be denied. Only in recent years have we begun to recognize that this latter situation, despite its surface calmness, is no less potentially tragic. The human waste is no less. Henry V emerges as the hero of his play, not as a man of action, but as a man who confronts problems which, since he is mortal, and since moral ambiguity lies in the nature of things mortal, are virtually insoluble. But in *Henry V* we go only to the edge of the tragic chasm at which point the king turns back to the world of men, a world of social action. Because he does not persist and destroy himself in an extreme of questioning, Henry is not finally a tragic hero. Yet insofar as he pursues an ideal of sentient and knowing kingship, he comes precariously close to fulfilling the prophecy of his dying father, that he recklessly sought "the greatness that will overwhelm" (IV.v.97). At the end of *Henry V*, the means were at hand and the way open for the creation of a Brutus or a Hamlet who would take that final step into the abyss.

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Notes

¹"From Henry V to Hamlet," British Academy Lecture (1925), rpt. in Peter Alexander, ed. *Studies in Shakespeare* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 292; *The Cease of Majesty* (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1961), p. 317; "The Formalism of Henry V," *Shakespeare Encomium* (1964), 16.

²*Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944; Rpt. New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 349, 353.

³*The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 7.

⁴"Falstaff, the Prince, and the History Play," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 16(1965), 63.

⁵"The Tudor History Play: An Essay in Definition," *PMLA*, 69(1954), 605. Still more to the point, Ribner notes that Francis Meres in his *Palladis Tamia* listed *Richard II*, *Richard II*, *King John*, and the *Henry IV* plays as among "our best for Tragedie." More recently, Robert Ornstein has called the effort to distinguish between tragedy and history "downright Polonian" (*A Kingdom for a Stage* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972], p. 222). For a more lengthy discussion of the literary relations between history and tragedy in the Elizabethan age, see Madeleine Doran's *Endeavors of Art: A Study of Form in Elizabethan Drama* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), Chapter six.

⁶"Introduction," *Shakespeare: The Histories*, ed. Eugene Waith (Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 8. In so arguing Waith stands in the midst of a continuing tradition. Soon after the publication of Tillyard's work, Alfred Harbage argued that "We are as much interested in individual characters in the histories as in the fables, often more so, and as much concerned with personal and domestic relationships" (*As They Liked It* [1947; rpt. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961], p. 161). Irving Ribner, though he concentrates on the political aspects of the plays, carefully notes that Shakespeare "is interested always in the whole man and in the total human role of which his function as a political being is but a part" (*The English History Play in the Age of Shakespeare* [1957; rev. ed. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1965], p. 158). M. M. Reese entered a similar qualification, noting that "Shakespeare was a poet, not a writer of political tracts" (*The Cease of Majesty*, p. viii). Since the publication of Waith's summary Robert Ornstein has added his voice: "From the beginning (Shakespeare's interest in human behavior and in political and moral issues cuts across the boundaries of dramatic genre. He places as great a value on the sanctity of personal relations in the History Plays as in the tragedies, because he intuits that order depends, not on concepts of hierarchy and degree, but on the fabric of personal and social relationships which is woven by ties of marriage, kinship, and friendship, by communal interests, and ideals of loyalty and trust" (*A Kingdom for a Stage*, p. 222). The most recent voice speaking in this vein has been that of Daniel Seltzer who has observed that "it was in the histories that Shakespeare learned to focus upon the developing experience of a single character, that experience eventually projected in ways which elicit the emotional responses, both in the character and in an audience, implicit in the theatrical effect we call tragic" ("Prince Hal and Tragic Style," *Shakespeare Survey*, 30 (1977), 18.

⁷This observation has been drawn in part from Norman Sanders, "The True Prince and the False Thief," *Shakespeare Survey*, 30 (1977). Professor Sanders goes a step further here, comparing Prince Hal's "awesome duty" to the "not completely dissimilar task" of Hamlet and noting that the two differ only in their "ultimate objective," a "public role and right doing" for Hal and "the discovery of self and true being for Hamlet," the marks of the political and the tragic hero respectively (p. 34). This final distinction is precisely the sort of division against which this paper would argue.

⁸My text is *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1972).

⁹*Shakespeare's History Plays*, pp. 346, 354.

¹⁰*The King's Two Bodies*, p. 24. Anne Barton has seconded his opinion that the doctrine of the King's Two bodies is "inherently tragic." She also suggests that Shakespeare's "conception of history, even when he was chronicling one of England's moments of glory, was fundamentally tragic" ("The King Disguised: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Comical History," in *The Triple Bond: Plays, Mainly Shakespearean, in Performance*, ed. Joseph G. Price (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), pp. 102, 115.

¹¹"Prince Hal and Tragic Style," p. 21. Some years earlier Gareth Lloyd Evans made a similar point when he argued that "in the creation of Hal may be seen the seeds of a conception of character whose first obvious flowering is in Hamlet" ("The Comical-tragical-historical method-Henry IV," in *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies: Early Shakespeare*, 3 (1967), 145-63).

¹²"Prince Hal and Tragic Style," p. 22.

¹³"The Episode with Williams in *Henry V*," *SEL*, 9(1969), 281-2.

¹⁴"'Twere best not Know Myself: *Othello*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*," *Shakespeare 400*, ed. James McManaway (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), 58.

¹⁵"Satiety and Conscience: Aspects of *Richard III*," *Antioch Review*, 24 (1964) 58. For further insight into Heilman's theory of tragic structure in Shakespeare, see also "To Know Himself: An Aspect of Tragic Structure," *REL*, 5(1964), 36-57.

¹⁶*The Cease of Majesty*, p. 323.

¹⁷*Henry V* as Heroic Comedy," *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama*, ed. Richard Hosley (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1962), p. 173.

¹⁸This reading is corroborated by the work of Gordon Ross Smith ("Shakespeare's *Henry V*: Another Part of the Critical Forest," *JHI*, 37(1976), 3-26. To buttress his interpretation of the scene Smith recalls the cnesure of such "warmongering clergy" by Erasmus: "Certain creatures in black and White cloaks . . . [who] never leave the courts of princes . . . [and] instil into their ears a love of war . . . [proclaiming] in their evangelical sermons that war is just, holy, and right. . . ."

What can a pretense of religion not achieve? Youth, inexperience, thirst for glory, anger, and natural human inclination swallow this whole. People are easily imposed upon."

¹⁹It is worth noting that Shakespeare has here made what appears to be a significant change in the order of events. In the chronicles of Halle and Holinshed, the tennis balls arrive before Henry has decided upon war with France and the insult is more truly contributory to Henry's decision. The effect of the change is to paint the king as a man in search of a scapegoat.

²⁰"'Twere Best Not Know Myself," pp. 90-1.

²¹For the suggestion that Henry makes two visits to the camp I am indebted to Anne Barton, "The King Disguised: Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the Comical History," p. 92. The first visit, made in the King's own person, serves to reassure the soldiers; the second, made incognito, reassures nobody and is disquieting for the king.

²²Book III, Chapter III. Rolf Soellner extracts this passage for use in *Shakespeare's Patterns of Self-Knowledge* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1972), an indispensable work for those interested in the Renaissance tradition of *Nosce Teipsum*.

²³"From *Richard II* to *Henry V*," *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Leonard Dean (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 202.

²⁴Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1956), pp. 51-2.

HENRY V: MAJESTY AND THE MAN

By Amy Lynch

Shakespeare's interest in the interplay of personality and politics pervades much of his work. Both the histories and the tragedies deal with the effect of power on the individual. Certainly the twentieth century has an interest, indeed a stake, in understanding political power and its potential ramifications. It is not surprising, then, that *Henry V*, a play about a king with tremendous power and compelling personality, sparks ongoing interest. It sparks controversy as well. Critics of the play divide themselves appropriately enough into two warring camps. One group of critics reads the play as an epic boasting Shakespeare's ideal king. James Winny takes at face value the archbishops' assessment of Henry's character, and M.M. Reese argues that Henry V does everything expected of a perfect monarch. The opposing group of critics reads *Henry V* as an ironic work in which the playwright sabotages the character of the king and from which an audience can only conclude that kingship and humane qualities are incompatible in this monarch. They note Henry's inconsistencies, his approval of Bardolph's execution and his defense of leniency a bare five lines later. E.K. Chambers calls Henry the "prototype of the blatant modern imperialist," and Hazlitt concludes that the king is an amiable monster. Naturally the two groups read differently scenes i and vii of Act IV, where Henry encounters the soldier Michael Williams. M.M. Reese cites the encounter as an example of Henry's ability to lead.¹ On the other hand, Harold Goddard argues that in this episode Henry proves himself less than a man and sells his honor.² The truth about Henry's character and about his meeting with Williams lies somewhere between these extremes, and it lies in understanding Shakespeare's use of the Elizabethan legal separation of the king's two bodies. Shakespeare separates the king's "body politic" from his "body natural," his political function from his personal identity, and both personae appear in the play. We need not make harsh judgements about Henry's character if we recognize the complex interweaving of man and monarch at work (and at war) within Shakespeare's Henry V.

Critics who wish to see Shakespeare's ideal monarch in Henry V and who are determined to reconcile apparent inconsistencies in Henry's character read the altercation with Williams as an example of firm but compassionate kingship. Dressed as a common soldier, Henry visits his men, and he encounters three soldiers who express doubt about the king's courage and his cause. The three are willing to blame the king for the deaths of men fighting for that cause. The king allays their fears about his courage, and he argues successfully that no king is responsible for the deaths of his subjects. One of the soldiers, Williams, suggests that the king's word is less than dependable;

and, incognito or no, the king is forced to challenge the soldier. They exchange gloves and agree to fight on the following day, but after the battle the king mercifully does not challenge Williams directly; rather, he sends Fluellen carrying the glove so that Williams will not be humiliated. Williams, good for his word, gives the lackey a box on the ear. When the king reveals his true identity, Williams begs pardon for his offense. The king not only grants pardon but also gives Williams a glove of gold coins, thus proving himself to be both tolerant and merciful. This reading preserves the mythic Henry V, but awareness of Shakespeare's perception of kingship indicates that the altercation between Henry V and Williams should not be so superficially read. A reading which takes into account the king's two bodies and identifies Henry as a man in these scenes is true to Shakespeare's intent.

According to Elizabethan law the king has two bodies. He is both myth and man. He is both public and private, both ideal and real, both the immortal and ubiquitous center of political structure and a mortal no different from any other man. Though the man dies, the king lives on. Though the individual is capable of error, the king is infallible. As Maynard Mack maintains, Shakespeare was clearly aware of the law and of the dramatic potential inherent in a "twinned but single creature."³ In his *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theory*, Ernest Kantorowicz notes the appropriateness of this concept to Shakespeare's work:

It was anyhow the live essence of his art to reveal the numerous planes active in any human being, to play them off against each other, to confuse them. . . . How convenient to find those ever contending planes, as it were, legalized. . . readily served to him.⁴

Two opposed critical opinions about Henry's character exist because Henry V is, in fact, two characters. The dichotomy is implicit in Nym's summation of Henry's character: "The King is a good king, but it must be as it may; he passes some humours and careers"⁵ Once we understand that Shakespeare intentionally distinguishes between king and man, we can read *Henry V* with more understanding. We can admire England's hero, and at the same time we are free to dislike the person Hal becomes upon assuming the crown. We understand that Henry V is both Hazlitt's amiable monster and Reese's perfect king. Henry V is a "twinned" figure, both king and man. But in the two scenes under discussion, he is certainly a man.

Shakespeare sends Henry as a man, not as a king, to encounter Williams. "Lend me thy cloak," Henry tells Sir Thomas Erpingham, and the king covers himself in order to appear no more than a man. Henry dismisses the "lords of England" and divests himself of all signs of royalty to walk among his men. His encounter with Pistol identifies him even more clearly as a man, not a king. When Pistol asks who comes, Henry answers simply, "A friend." Pistol calls the king "a bawcock, and a heart of gold / A lad of life, an imp of fame."

He concludes, "I love the lovely bully" (IV.i.46-48). These are compliments to the king, yet they reveal Pistol's recognition of Henry as a person. Furthermore, the king's own words indicate that he perceives of himself as a human being. He says that he is "Henry le Roi," "a gentleman of a company," and he asserts that the king "is but a man as I am." Shakespeare purposely "cloaks" Henry as a man in this scene. In no dramatic sense is Henry king here. The only role he plays is that of a common soldier who, like any other soldier, waits by a fire on the night before battle. It follows then that we must read the scene accordingly--as a comment on Henry's personal integrity.

As they discuss the coming battle, the soldiers attack, not Henry's political acuity, but his personal honor. They question the dependability of his word. Three times Williams expresses doubt about the honor, and therefore the manhood, of the king. It is Henry who first mentions honor. "Methinks I could not die anywhere so contented as in the King's company," he says, "his cause being just and his quarrel honorable" (IV.i.126-28). Williams' immediate reply, "That's more than we know," is the first of three insults to Harry's honor. Williams further angers the king when, with the help of Bates, he blames Henry for the suffering and deaths of English soldiers which will result from battle the following day:

But if the cause be not good, the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs, and arms, and heads, chopp'd off in a battle, shall join together at the latter day and cry... Now if these men do not die well, it will be a black matter for the King that led them in it. (IV.i.134-37, 144-45)

In his reply, Harry completely ignores Williams' assertion that a king is responsible for suffering he causes, "those legs, and arms, and heads, chopp'd off in a battle"; Henry seizes instead the ambiguity of Williams' final indictment--"If these men do not die well." Rather than address his responsibility for suffering and senseless death, the issues immediate to three soldiers who have "no great cause to desire the approach of day," Henry chooses to talk about responsibility for his men's souls. A father is not responsible for a son's damnation, nor is a master responsible for his slave's soul, Henry argues. He extends the analogy to soldiers:

If they die unprovided, no more is the King guilty of their damnation than he was before guilty of those impieties for which they are now visited. Every subject's duty is the King's, but every subject's soul is his own. (IV.i.173-77)

This is rather a handy arrangement for the king. Harry even argues that to die in war, when a man is prepared, is "advantage" to a man. Sadly, the king cannot reassure his men that they fight for a just cause and a "quarrel honorable." Henry is fighting France only because it is politically expedient,

and he will cause suffering and death for which he may be called to account. He has no answer for his men, only irrelevant analogy and sleight-of-hand fustian.

Williams accepts Harry's reasoning about the damnation of the soldier's souls: "Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill upon his own head, the King is not to answer it" (IV.i.186-87). This, coupled with Bates's affirmation that he will fight "lustily" for Henry, creates the illusion that the soldiers' doubts are satisfied, yet the central issue of Henry's responsibility not to engage his men in a dangerous and dishonorable cause remains at large. Williams' reply in no way indicates compliance on that issue. One can more easily imagine Williams' line delivered with resignation than with conviction after Harry's long and abstract diatribe.

Williams' third insult to Henry's honor is his doubt that the king will forgo ransoming when "our throats are cut." The disguised monarch responds with wit, "If I live to see it, I will never trust his word after." Williams, without knowing he is doing so, adds another insult to his king's manhood:

That's a perilous shot out of an elder-gun, that a poor and a private displeasure can do against a monarch! You may as well go about to turn the sun to ice with fanning in his face with a peacock's feather.

(IV.i.197-201)

The speech implies that the king is not like other men, not subject to or affected by the same things other men are subject to and affected by, and not possessed, perhaps, of the same virtues. The two exchange gloves, and the king tells Williams of his gage, "If ever I live to see it, I will challenge it." Significantly, Williams replies, "Keep thy word."

It is no accident that immediately before he encounters Williams again the king is told by Fluellen, "I need not be ashamed of your Majesty, praised by God, so long as your Majesty is an honest man" (IV.vii.114-15). Fluellen's qualification sounds like Henry's own of the night before--"his cause being just and his quarrel honorable." In either case the assertion is that loyalty is owed a king only if he is first a worthy man. The king replies to Fluellen, "God keep me so," and immediately breaks his word to Williams. Upon seeing the glove in Williams' helmet, the king does not challenge it. Instead he asks Fluellen if a soldier must keep his word in such a situation. "He is a craven and a villain else," Fluellen replies. Henry proves himself just that. He asks Fluellen to wear the glove and incriminates himself when he confesses to Warwick, "I by bargain should / Wear it myself" (IV.vii.174-75).

In the action which follows, Williams' word is challenged. Fluellen, of course, is wrong to challenge it, for Williams is no traitor. "Do you think I'll be forsworn?" Williams asks. The obvious answer is no. As for his royal

challenger, we may not be so certain of the answer. Henry V finally confronts Williams: "It was ourself thou didst abuse." Williams defends himself with the truth: "You appear'd to me but as a common man" (IV.vii.51). It is the man, not the majesty, which Williams insults under cover of night; and the man never answers. In fact, the man Henry is noticeably absent from the settlement with Williams. It is not a scene in which two men settle a quarrel; it is a scene in which a king attempts to buy his honor: he offers Williams gold. The issues of Henry's responsibility, his honor, and his good word are deflected, not satisfied, by his offer of royal bribe. Williams, recognizing hypocrisy when he sees it, tells the king, "I'll none of your money," to which Shakespeare gives Henry no reply. The better man has the last word.

The episode illustrates the dual nature of Henry V more clearly than any other in the play. Against the backdrop of Henry's absolute political and military success, Shakespeare reveals a man who fails to keep his word and defend his honor. The myth is not the man. "The mirror of all Christian kings" is "craven and villain" as well. The playwright leaves us to draw what conclusions we will about power and personal integrity, but we need not decide whether Henry is monster or saint. He is king, dichotomy of majesty and man.

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Notes

¹Reese's defense of Henry V is in his *The Cease of Majesty* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961). Other defenses of Henry include James Winny's *The Player King* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1968) and J.H. Walter's introduction to the Arden edition of *King Henry V* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1954).

²Goddard's chapter on *Henry V* in his *The Meaning of Shakespeare* deals with Shakespeare's undermining of Henry's character throughout the play. Goddard's conclusions about Henry's encounter with Williams are very similar to mine except that Goddard fails to recognize Shakespeare's separation of king and man. Goddard is joined in his disparaging view of Henry V by Roy Battenhouse, "Henry V as Heroic Comedy," in *Essays on Shakespeare and Elizabethan Drama* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1962) and E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956).

³Maynard Mack, Jr., *Killing the King* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 2.

⁴Ernest H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1957), p. 26.

⁵William Shakespeare, "Henry V," in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), II.i.125-6. Other references to this work will be cited parenthetically.

**THE COBBLER, THE DISROBED IMAGE
AND
THE MOTIF OF MOVEMENT IN
JULIUS CAESAR
By William B. Toole**

The structure of *Julius Caesar* is based on the theme of mental misconstruction¹--the tendency that human beings have, in one way or another, to judge themselves, other people, and events wrongly. This theme is reflected most prominently in the interrelated characters and experiences of Caesar, Cassius, and Brutus. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the extent to which the ironic currents that pervade the play and emphasize the thematic significance of the interrelationship originate at the outset of the play through the characterization of the cobbler, the focus on movement, and the references to the disrobing of images. We shall concern ourselves first with the way in which the motifs of movement and the disrobed image direct us to the central irony in the character and experience of Caesar and then with the manner in which the relationship of the cobbler to the motif of movement directs us to a similar irony in the characters and experiences of Brutus and Cassius.

The first point to note about the opening scene is the emphasis on movement, physical and mental. The play begins with a concerted action--a crowd of commoners move forward--which is suddenly arrested by the command of the tribune Flavius. After questioning the crowd's leader, a cobbler, a discovery that their celebrative mood and holiday apparel are prompted by the triumphal return of Caesar, a second tribune, Murellus, thunders down an indictment of their fickleness. They are, he cries, "blocks," "stones," "worse than senseless things" (I, i, 35)² since they have forgotten their former admiration of Pompey in their celebration of one who "comes in triumph over Pompey's blood" (I, i, 51). This reproach, backed by Flavius' call for them to "weep" (I, i, 58) in repentance, has its desired effect and the commoners disperse, their change of direction reflecting their changed mental disposition. Then Flavius exultantly draws our attention to the relationship between mental or emotional and physical movement brought about by his words:

See, wh'er their basest mettle be not mov'd:
They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness. (I. i. 61-2)

This rhetorically induced change of direction points us toward that crucial scene at the center of the drama in which Antony's eloquence moves

the populace to a reversal of the celebratory mood brought about by Brutus's justification of the spilling of Caesar's ambitious blood. Though Antony's speech is, of course, far richer than the joint effort of the tribunes, it is related to their speeches primarily through his manipulation of two contrasting motifs: blood, which represents feeling or the animating force of existence; and inanimate objects, which represent lack of feeling or non-life. In moving his audience to passion over the blood of Caesar, Antony makes use of a rhetorical strategy considerably more sophisticated than that employed by the tribunes who had moved their audience to a change of emotion over the blood of Pompey. Antony does not tell them they are blocks and stones; instead he assures them they are better than senseless things. He must not, he says, read them the will of Caesar because they are "not wood, . . . not stones, but men" (III, ii, 142).

Thus he manipulates the crowd into compelling him to read the will. Before doing so, however, he directs their attention to the rents in the robe of Caesar and the bloody gashes in his disrobed body. In this way he moves them to the emotion the tribunes had sought to induce in their audience earlier:

O now you weep, and I perceive you feel
The diot of pity. . . . (III, ii, 193-94)

And he concludes his oration with the reading of Caesar's will. This leads the populace to the mood of "fury" and "revenge" (III, i, 263, 270) that he had earlier prophesied over the "bleeding piece of earth" (III, i, 255) Caesar had become. And the subsequent action of the mob leads to the hasty retreat of Brutus and Cassius. When a messenger brings Antony word that his adversaries "are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome" (III, ii, 269), Antony observes that they must have heard of how he had "mov'd" (III, ii, 270) the people.

These parallel "movements" are not designed simply to call attention to the instability or featherlike fickleness of common minds; they are also designed to lead us in a subtler, more profoundly ironic way to see the unwitting inconstancy and susceptibility to misinterpretation characteristic of aristocratic minds. To make the first of our points in this connection, we must turn our attention back to the final part of the opening scene of the play and observe its relation to the characterization of Caesar and Antony's rhetorical virtuosity.

Having successfully moved the crowd of commoners, Flavius and Murellus set out to "disrobe" any "images" which are "deck'd with ceremonies" (I, i, 64, 65) that reflect the triumph of Caesar. That is to say, they intend to remove celebratory garments from the blocks or stones that have been carved into replicas of humanity. And they do so because they are determined to forestall the rise of Caesar:

These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's wing
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,
Who else would soar above the view of men. . . . (I, i, 72-74)

In the next scene we are reminded of the disrobing action when we learn that the tribunes, "for pulling scarfs off Caesar's images, are put to silence" (I, ii, 285-86).

That the tribunes have good reason to feel that Caesar's latest success might precipitate a move to an extraordinary height is strongly suggested by the dramatization of Caesar's character in subsequent scenes. It is apparent that his late triumph has contributed to the development of a mental perspective that makes the great man incapable of seeing himself as a man in the most basic or elementary sense. He is not conscious of the smell of his own mortality. Thus though he clearly sees the danger in a man of Cassius' character, he does not fear him, he says, as an ordinary man might, for "always I am Caesar" (I, ii, 212). Later he refuses to heed the portents of nature and the premonitory dream of Calpurnia because he is confident that those things which threaten him will vanish when they see "the face of Caesar" (II, ii, 12). He sees himself as being more dangerous than the danger to whom he, Caesar the lion, is the "elder and more terrible" brother (II, ii, 47). The juxtaposition of such statements with various references to his physical infirmities--his susceptibility to deafness, the ravages of fever, and the portentous "falling sickness"--leads us inevitably to Calpurnia's conclusion that Caesar's "wisdom is consum'd in confidence" (II, ii, 49).³

Though he has interpreted the augurers' failure to find a "heart" in the sacrificial "beast"⁴ as a commentary on his "cowardice" (II, ii, 40, 41) should he remain at home; to humor Calpurnia he decides to stay away from the Senate-house. And when Decius requests a reason, he asserts that the "cause is in my will, I will not come" (II, ii, 71). But he goes on to explain to Decius that it is Calpurnia's dream of the bloodbath which has made him decide to stay at home. His intention is then changed by the artful and deliberate misinterpretation of Decius which at once flatters him and appeals to his ambition.

This change of mind, as a number of commentators have observed, throws a sharply ironic light on the manner in which he responds to the petition of the conspirators just prior to the assassination. Cimber is the first to fall at his feet; though such "lowly courtesies / Might fire the blood of ordinary men" (III, i, 36-37), Caesar says, he remains firm because he does not possess that "rebel blood" (III, i, 40) which can be "thaw'd from the true quality / With that which melteth fools. . ." (III, i, 41-42). What he is saying, of course, is that his blood--his emotions and mind--is immovable because he is not susceptible to flattery; and it is obvious that he sees no discrepancy between such a statement and the circumstances which have led him to the

Senate. He amplifies his point when Brutus and Cassius throw their voices behind Cimber's plea:

I could be well mov'd, if I were as you;
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me. . . (III, i, 58-59)

He then goes on to assert that he is to ordinary men as the Northern Star is to other stars. It is supremely ironic that in the moment before he is brought down he should observe that men are "flesh and blood" and that he alone "unassailable holds on his rank, / Unshak'd of motion. . ." (III, i, 65, 69-70). His god-like or Colossus-like image of himself--"Hence," he cries just before the daggers strike, "Wilt thou lift up Olympus?" (III, i, 74)--is, as it were, disrobed as he is made to fly an ordinary pitch and descend to that naked estate to which all men must come.

It is important to note that the flow of the "immovable" blood that follows this action is emphasized by Antony in his funeral oration as he, for his own rhetorical purposes, disrobes Caesar. Antony holds up Caesar's mantle, points to the rents made by the daggers of Cassius and Casca, and then spotlights the work of Brutus:

And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,
Mark how the blood of Caesar followed it. . . (III, ii, 177-78)

After this, the "most unkindest cut of all" (III, ii, 183), he observes, Caesar fell

Even at the base of Pompey's statue
(Which all the while ran blood). . . (III, ii, 188-89)

Having moved his audience to tears, he invites them to look directly at the disrobed body of Caesar:⁵

Kind souls, what weep you when you but behold
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,
Here is himself, marr'd as you see with traitors. (III, ii, 195-97)

Murellus and Flavius, as we noted, succeeded in changing the celebratory mood of their audience by reminding them of the "blood of Pompey," following which they set out to forestall Caesar's rise by disrobing his images. These aspects of the first scene of the play thus foreshadow the complex irony reflected in the movement of mind that Antony brings about as he incites the populace to riot by calling attention to the disrobed body of Caesar and the blood that has flowed from it. Blinded by the image of himself created by triumphs such as that which he had over Pompey's blood, Caesar became the victim of his own ambition and susceptibility to flattery. Seeing himself as god-like in spite of his physical infirmities, he ignored the portents of nature,

misinterpreted the results of the augurers' sacrifice, and allowed himself to be seduced into a misinterpretation of Calpurnia's dream. Thus the god-like Caesar became a sacrificial beast--"Here was thou bay'd, brave hart" (III, i, 204)--as the blood that he considered immovable flowed forth at the base of Pompey's statue.⁶ The act of butchery to which he was subjected at the Capitol provides the culminating ironic comment on his implicit association of his will or spirit with his body.

The tribunes' movement of the base mettle of the commoners, which is designed to disrobe Caesar or make him fly an ordinary pitch, also provides a correspondence to another mental movement--the intellectual seduction of Brutus by Cassius, which begins in the second scene of the play. Cassius sets out to bring Brutus into the conspiracy to bring Caesar down because he is convinced that the name or reputation of Brutus is essential to its success. When, for example, Casca observes to him later that Brutus's "countenance, like richest alchymy," (I, iii, 159), will change that which appears to be "offense" in the conspirators to "virtue and to worthiness" (I, iii, 158), Cassius affirms this assessment of their need for Brutus.

In the arguments that he employs to move the mind or spirit of Brutus, Cassius reveals his own nature and motives. Though his case against Caesar is made in the name of liberty, the details and illustrations he employs to drive his points home reveal his obsession with the disparity between his position and Caesar's. Using flattering psychological tactics comparable to those Decius employed later on Caesar,⁷ Cassius appeals to Brutus's pride in his reputation and his ancestry as he subtly invites him to share his jealousy:⁸

Brutus and Caesar: what should be in that "Caesar"?
 Why should that name be sounded more than yours?
 Write them together, yours is as fair a name;
 Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well;
 Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em,
 "Brutus" will start a spirit as soon as "Caesar." (I, ii, 142-47)

There was, he goes on to say, a Brutus in the past who would have "brook'd / Th' eternal devil to keep his state in Rome / As easily as a king" (I, ii, 159-61).

Though Brutus refuses to commit himself at this point to any action against Caesar--for the present, he says, "I would not. . . be any further mov'd (I, ii, 166-67)--Cassius is convinced that his design has been successful. His soliloquy at the end of the scene is choric in nature, calling attention to the basis of his character and to the significance of what has taken place between Brutus and him:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet I see
 Thy honorable mettle may be wrought
 From that it is dispos'd; therefore it is meet
 That noble minds keep ever with their likes;

For who so firm that cannot be seduc'd?
 Caesar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.
 If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,
 He should not humor me. (I, ii, 308-15)

It is clear that Cassius has performed a kind of intellectual seduction, but it becomes equally clear that Brutus's mind operates on an entirely different plane from that of Cassius. When we next see Brutus and observe him reason his way into the conspiracy, we find that his basis for participation does not in any way reflect the mind and character of Cassius. He has not responded to Cassius's sneering suggestion that Caesar's physical frailty makes his position of power ludicrous, nor indeed is his mind preoccupied in any way with Cassius' conception of what Caesar is--a "god" and a "Colossus" (I, ii, 116, 136); rather he is concerned with what Caesar might become. He is not troubled by the disparity between his position and that of Caesar; he is concerned about what Caesar's power as a king might mean to the state:

I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
 But for the general. He would be crown'd.
 How that might change his nature, there's the question

 Th' abuse of greatness is when it disjoins
 Remorse from power. . . . (II, i, 11-13, 18-19)

Though, as he goes on to admit with compelling honesty, there is nothing in Caesar's past conduct which suggests that he might allow his passions to overcome his reason and thereby become a tyrant, Brutus decides to assassinate his friend because of the possibility that his nature might be changed by the assumption of monarchy. Thus he finds his own noble, if weakly reasoned, motives for being moved to take action against Caesar.⁹

Whereas the motif of the disrobed image following the movement of the commoners in I, i, directs us to a significant irony in connection with the mind of Caesar, so the characterization of the cobbler¹⁰ preceding that movement points us to a significant irony in the presentation of Brutus's mind and his relationship to Cassius.

When the movement of the commoners is halted by the command of Flavius, the one who "leads them about the streets" (I, i, 28) is singled out for questioning. The leader turns out to be a cobbler, who, in response to Murellus's question, puns on the name of his profession. In comparison with a skilled worker, he says, he is himself a "cobbler" (I, i, 11), i.e., a bungler or botcher. In response to further questions he proceeds to pun in various ways on various aspects of his profession. He follows his trade with a "safe conscience" because he is a "mender of bad soles" (I, i, 13, 14); he hopes that Flavius, who becomes irritated by his verbal quibbling, is not "out with me," but if the tribune is "out. . . I can mend you" (I, i, 16, 17). When his profession

is at last established--"Thou art a cobbler, art thou?" (I, i, 20)--he assures the tribunes that "all that I live by is with the awl," that "withal" he acts as a "surgeon to old shoes" (I, i, 21, 22, 23), and that through his "handiwork" (I, i, 26) he is able to "recover" those that are in "great danger" (I, i, 24).

All of these remarks apply in one way or another to the part which Brutus is to play in the conspiracy and thus contribute to the supercharged current of irony that results from Cassius's effort to move the mind and spirit of Brutus. What the cobbler has to say about the way he follows his trade applies to Brutus's relationship to the conspiracy. As the putative alchemical factor or the countenance of virtue, he brings to the assassination "a safe conscience"; from the standpoint of the other conspirators, he is the mender of bad souls. And it is through the direction of his surgical handiwork--"Speak hands for me" (III, i, 76), says Casca--that he expects to recover the endangered commonwealth. Furthermore, though it is true, as Antony observed at the end of the play, that "the noblest Roman of them all" alone of "all the conspirators" acted "in a general honest thought" out of the desire for a "common good to all" (V, v, 68, 69, 71, 72) he, like the cobbler of safe conscience and the men who followed him about the streets, was moved into "guiltiness."

The detail in the dramatization of the cobbler that more than any other keys us to the ironic significance of Brutus' character is to be found in his initial pun--one that suggests either an understanding of himself or a capacity for humorous self-deprecation that is conspicuously lacking in Brutus. The cobbler says that he is a bungler or botcher. The aptness of this remark to the workmanship of Brutus in the assassination enterprise may best be established by a review of the development of the relationship between Brutus and Cassius following Brutus' decision to join, or take charge of, the conspiracy.

Cassius' motive for moving against Caesar, we may say, is obliquely analogous to that of the tribunes; he wishes to bring down one who has "become a god" (I, ii, 116) and to whom he must "bend" (I, ii, 117) himself in subjection. It may also be pertinent to say that Cassius, knowing that he is *out* of Caesar's affections, expects to *mend* his fortunes through the aid of Brutus. Ironically enough, the silence to which he comes is brought about by his misconception of the role Brutus plays in the conspiracy. Even more ironically, as we follow the relationship of Brutus and Cassius, it becomes apparent that Cassius, in seeking to escape from one form of tyranny, falls subject to another. For Brutus' confidence in the infallibility of his nobility leads him to assume a confidence in his reasoning powers which is as inflated and, in its own way, as pretentious and ludicrous as Caesar's implicit assumption of physical inviolability.¹¹ Following the successful movement of Brutus' mind, Cassius is forced to bow again and again to the Olympian high-

mindfulness of the noblest Roman of them all;¹² and on each occasion that he bows he is moved closer to the disaster which awaits him at Philippi--to a death which is as appropriate as that which Caesar met in a pool of blood at the base of Pompey's statue.

Brutus begins his reign of moral tyranny when, the conspirators having reached an agreement, Cassius proposes they swear their resolution. Brutus says there is no need for words; the virtue of their enterprise and their nobility of blood is enough. Then Cassius gives strong reasons for killing Antony as well as Caesar. Brutus says no. In order to kill the spirit of Caesar they must destroy his body, but they will do so as religious "sacrificers" (II, i, 166).¹³ To hack off Antony, the ineffectual limb of the dead Caesar, will make them look like "butchers." Later the same kind of reasoning leads him, over Cassius' objections, to allow Antony to speak at the funeral ceremonies.

Brutus' misconception of the nature of the assassination and of the potency of Antony as a limb of Caesar is brilliantly illustrated by Antony's funeral oration. Antony does not depart from the ground rules Brutus establishes for him, but by the time he concludes he makes the honor that Brutus prizes so highly an ugly word as he, in effect, invites his audience to look beneath the ceremonial rhetoric with which Brutus had clothed the act of butchery. His skill as an orator is best illustrated by the manner in which he manipulates the name of Brutus as an apparent synonym for nobility and honor; for by the time he cries, "O judgment! thou [art] fled to *brutish*¹⁴ beasts" (III, ii, 104), it is clear that he is not merely indicting the fickleness of the plebeians for not mourning Caesar; he is also, by means of a bitter pun, assessing the judgment that the conspirators have passed on Caesar.

Cassius believed that the name or image of Brutus, his "countenance," would alchemize, or provide the illusion of worthiness to a vicious action. Instead it is the name of Brutus as fashioned by Antony which galvanizes the people into action against the conspirators. In appealing to Brutus' pride as part of the strategy to move the mind of Brutus, Cassius observed that the name of Brutus would conjure up a spirit as well as that of Caesar. And so in Antony's funeral oration it does. It is in large measure the name of Brutus that conjures up the spirit of ruthless revenge that Antony associates with the spirit of Caesar. Thus it is the image of Brutus as a beast without a heart, rather than as an elixir, which determines the fate of the conspirators.

The ruthlessness of the triumvirate and the senseless attack on Cinna the poet, as has often been observed, provide an ironic commentary on Brutus' rationale for the assassination. The spirit of revenge that Antony conjures up from the image that has been disrobed by the handiwork of Brutus directs the reign of tyranny, "power" divorced from "remorse," that Brutus had acted to forestall. Ironically enough, it is the "will" of Caesar, separated from his body, which, as Antony's final rhetorical trump, moves the

crowd to brute violence. The appearances of the ghost, like the reading of the "will," call attention to the wrongness of Brutus' assumption that he could put an end to the spirit of Caesar by destroying his body. The manifestations of Brutus' "ill spirit" point toward the theme of retribution reflected in the suicides of Brutus and Cassius as both men die on the swords which they had used to kill Caesar. The theme is made explicit when, standing over Cassius' body, Brutus observes:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!
 Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
 In our own proper entrails. (V, iii, 93-95)

The political nightmare that Rome experiences--the counterpart to the hideous dream-like state, "the phantasma" (II, i, 63),¹⁵ which preoccupies Brutus' mind between the decision to assassinate and the event itself--ends with the deaths of those who were primarily responsible for bringing about the state of moral chaos.

The thematic focus of *Julius Caesar*, as we observed at the outset of this paper, is on the extent to which the human mind can both in itself and as a consequence of outside influences go awry: "men may construe things after their fashion, / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves" (I, iii, 34-35), Cicero says in Act I just prior to Cassius' interpretation of the monstrous portents; and Titinius says in Act V to the body of Cassius, "Alas, thou has misconstrued everything" (V, iii, 84). The idea reverberates throughout the play.¹⁶ Shakespeare has taken the Senecan theme of blood revenge¹⁷ and brilliantly amplified it in political as well as psychological terms. Pompey's blood, in effect, begets the blood of Caesar by contributing to a cast of mind that makes the triumphant warrior vulnerable to the jealous machinations of Cassius. Cassius misconstrues the effect which Brutus's noble character will have upon the conspiracy and, in making himself vulnerable to Brutus' moral tyranny, becomes subject to the retribution symbolized by the spirit of Caesar. Upon taking charge of the conspiracy, Brutus, assuming that his reasoning powers are as impeccable as what he stands for, tries to impose an image of nobility upon a base action and becomes the victim of the "ill spirit" that is conjured up by his name and action.

The complex irony that results from the interrelationship of the various kinds of misconstruction reflected in the characters of Brutus, Caesar, and Cassius is strikingly emphasized in the quarrel which develops between Brutus and Cassius.¹⁸ Upon hearing from Lucilius that Cassius has received him as Brutus' emissary with courtesy but not with warmth, Brutus remarks that declining affection is always suggested by "enforced ceremony" (IV, ii, 21), a phrase designed to remind us of the ritual which he had made out of the butchery of Caesar. Somewhat the same point is made, with another twist of

irony, when Cassius appears and declares that the "sober form" of Brutus hides "wrongs" (IV, ii, 40). Cassius is, of course, unaware of the ironic reverberation of these words, which should remind us of the function that he intended Brutus to provide for the conspiracy. In providing that function through a "sober form" which was also an "enforced ceremony," Brutus has led himself and Cassius to the brink of destruction.

The quarrel springs from an apparent misunderstanding over money. With characteristic thick-sighted logic, as a number of critics have pointed out, Brutus rebukes Cassius for the manner in which he raises money and later criticizes him for not sending him the money he needs to pay his legions.¹⁹ When Cassius responds with anger to the initial insult, Brutus comments coldly: "The name of Cassius honors this corruption" (IV, iii, 15). Once again our attention is directed through an ironic reverberation to an earlier situation. Here, as it were, Cassius is put into the position of Brutus: His name is to the vile action of accepting bribes that will enable him to pay their armies as Brutus' name was meant to be to the vile action of assassination. Brutus proceeds, in effect, to change places with Cassius as he presents an interpretation of the assassination that reflects the needs and basis of his nature in the same way that Cassius' intellectual seduction effort earlier reflected the basis of his character. "Did not," he cries, "great Julius bleed for justices' sake?" (IV, iii, 19). And he continues:

. . .What? shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers, shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes?
And sell the mighty space of our large honors
For so much trash as may be grasped thus? (IV, iii, 21-26)

In order to accommodate his need to maintain a "safe conscience," his mind provides a rationale for the assassination quite different from the one which led him into the conspiracy. Now he says they set out to kill Caesar for what he was, or what he had done, not, as he decided earlier, for what he might become.

The ironic reverberations of this scene are compounded when, as the quarrel continues, both Brutus and Cassius, in different ways, step into the character of Caesar. When Cassius angrily cries that Caesar would not have had the courage to have "mov'd" (IV, iii, 58) him in the way Brutus has, Brutus, in an uncharacteristic moment of perception, offers an insight into Cassius's nature comparable to the insight Caesar revealed at the outset of the play. Cassius, Brutus says, would not have dared to provoke Caesar. When Cassius then, in effect, threatens Brutus--"Do not presume too much upon my love; / I may do that I shall be sorry for" (IV, iii, 63-64)--the tone of Brutus' response is blatantly Caesarian:

There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;
 For I am arm'd so strong in honesty
 That they pass by me as the idle wind. . . . (IV, iii, 66-68)

The quarrel then moves toward resolution when Cassius bends himself in subjection, rhetorically speaking, by taking on the sacrificial role of Caesar. "Brutus," he says plaintively, "hath riv'd my heart" (IV, iii, 85). The parallel is made explicit as he goes on to offer Brutus his "dagger" and urge him to "strike as thou didst at Caesar. . ." (IV, iii, 105).

It is important to note that Brutus is unaware of the change which has taken place in his mind with regard to his motivation for the assassination and that he is oblivious to the implications of his insight into Cassius' character. Caesar's confidence in the omnipotence of his spirit would not allow him to acknowledge the reality of the physical threat that a man like Cassius posed for him; somewhat similarly, Brutus' confidence in, or need to believe in, his moral infallibility prevents him from seeing the true nature of the assassination mirrored in the character of Cassius. So it is that Brutus dies on the sword of assassination, never realizing the extent to which he misconstrued the nature of his attempt to "recover" the commonwealth. Shortly before he dies, he rejoices that he "found no man but he was true to me" (V, v, 35)--a remark which emphasizes the dimness of his vision, not only in his overlooking what Antony had done at the funeral service but in his continued blindness to the motives which Cassius had for bringing him into the assassination plot.

In the final analysis it is Brutus' pride in, or obsession with maintaining, a safe conscience that to a large extent makes him the bungler that he is. He saw himself, in Caius Ligarius' phrase, as the "soul of Rome" (II, i, 321). He saw himself in the light of that earlier Brutus who had delivered Rome from tyranny--a "brave son, deriv'd from honorable loins" (II, i, 322). So it was that he led the conspirators about the streets: "Set on your feet," Caius says, and "I follow you" (II, i, 331, 332). Led then into the savage spectacle of the bloodbath, his handiwork: "let us," he says, "bathe our hands in Caesar's blood" and "walk" into the "market-place," crying, "Peace, freedom, and liberty" (III, i, 106, 108, 110). "Ay" (III, i, 120), says Cassius, whose "corporal motion," like Lepidus' in relation to Antony, becomes "govern'd" by the spirit of Brutus (IV, i, 33): "Brutus shall lead, and we will grace his heels" (III, i, 121).

The play makes clear the conceit that Brutus the soul of Rome is also Brutus the cobbler and it is, I believe, important to respond to Antony's final moving assessment of Brutus' character in the light of such a perception.²⁰

In the exchange of insults that preceded the battle at Philippi, Antony bitterly called attention to the disparity between image and action in the character of Brutus: "In your bad strokes, Brutus, you give good words; /

Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart, / Crying, 'Long live! hail, Caesar!' (V, i, 30-32). In the heat of this moment Antony means what he says. Yet, as his words over the body of Brutus indicate later, he does not believe that such disparity is the result of hypocrisy:

This was the noblest Roman of them all:
 All the conspirators, save only he,
 Did that they did in envy of great Caesar
 He, only in a general honest thought
 And common good to all, made one of them,
 His life was gentle, and the elements
 So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
 And say to all the world, "This was a man!" (V, v, 68-75)

This summing up, taken at face value, gives us perhaps as many as three parts of Brutus, but we do not have the man entire unless we perceive the current of irony which what we have witnessed brings to bear on Antony's words. Antony, speaking from his heart, means what he says here just as he meant what he said to Brutus as Philippi. But his judgment reflects his own limited perspective and, like most of the judgments and decisions in the play, is strongly influenced by the immediate situation.

When he calls attention to the extent to which Brutus' character stands out from the character of the other conspirators, we can follow him. But we as an audience should not be moved by his eloquence to the point that we accept his final laudatory sentence without some reservations. We are not meant to forget that Brutus, whose life, Antony says, was gentle, is the man who orchestrated the ritual of butchery which brought chaos to Rome. This disparity is enough to make us realize that the strings of this harmonious passage are, in some measure, false. "This was the noblest Roman of them all," Antony says. Of all the conspirators, yes. "This was a man," Nature, according to Antony, might say. Yes to this too. But it seems plausible to assume that the tone of Nature, in making such an assertion, would reflect feelings more mixed than Antony assumes in his most magnanimous and triumphant moment.

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Notes

¹Rene E. Fortin, "Julius Caesar: An Experiment in Point of View," *SQ*, 19 (1968), 341-47, and D.J. Palmer, "Tragic Error in *Julius Caesar*," *SQ*, 21 (1970), 399-409, have emphasized the thematic significance of mental error in the play.

²All Shakespeare quotations are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

³Cf. Douglas L. Peterson, "Wisdom Consumed in Confidence: An Examination of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," *SQ* 16 (1965), 24, who says that the flaw that makes Caesar responsible for his own death is an unshakable belief in his own invulnerability, which is identified in the play as "wisdom-consuming confidence" or "security."

⁴John Anson, "Julius Caesar: The Politics of the Hardened Heart," *Shakespeare Studies*, 2 (1966), 21-22, suggests that the beast without a heart represents on the one hand the leaderless state and on the other Caesar who, in his refusal to grant the petition of Cimber, becomes, "in a moral sense, a beast without a heart" and thus "prefigures within himself the letting of heartblood that overtakes him."

⁵Though Plutarch describes this incident, it seems probable, as Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources: Comedies and Tragedies*, I (London: Methuen & Co., 1957), p. 191, points out, that Appian's account was Shakespeare's immediate source: "It is striking that Appian and Shakespeare both use the word *vesture* and speak of its being wounded or cut with wounds. Plutarch describes the same incident but without the verbal parallel." The idea for the current of irony that springs from the motif of the disrobed image may have been triggered by the coalescence of this passage in Shakespeare's mind with two separate passages in North's translation of Plutarch's "Life of Caesar" (Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, V [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964], p. 81, pp. 85-86): The first deals with the action of the tribunes: When crowned images of Caesar, like kings, were set up, "Those the two Tribunes, Flavius and Marullus, went and pulled downe. . . ."; the second concerns the manner in which Metellus gives the signal for the assassination by, in effect, disrobing Caesar: "Metellus at length, taking his gowne with both his hands, pulled it over his necke, which was the signe geven the confederates to sette upon him."

⁶By having Caesar fall in front of Pompey's statue, Shakespeare, as John W. Velz, "Undular Structure in *Julius Caesar*," *MLR*, 66 (1971), 25, observes, presents implicitly the theme of poetic justice which Plutarch presented explicitly in the following passage from his "Life of Caesar": "thus it seemed, that the image tooke just revenge of Pompeys enimie, being thrown downe on the ground at his feete. . . ." It seems important to add that part of Shakespeare's strategy in developing the theme of retribution may be seen in his use of "Pompey's blood" to refer to Pompey's sons. By means of the ambiguity which this figure of speech allows, Shakespeare is able to suggest the theme of retribution more powerfully and subtly than Plutarch and at the same time exploit the irony that results from Caesar's assumption of a statue-like rigidity in response to the petition. It is interesting to note further that both of the interpretive points that emerge from the blood motif in connection with Caesar may be related to the moral attached to the story of Caesar in the 1578 edition of the *Mirror*. There we are told, as J. Leeds Barrell points out, "Shakespeare and Roman History," *MLR*, 53 (1958), 341, that Caesar died because of his vain glory and because he slew so many.

⁷Cf. R.A. Yoder, "History and the Histories in *Julius Caesar*," *SQ*, 24 (1973), 311.

⁸"Throughout this scene," as Ernest Schanzer has noted, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 38, "he tries to arouse in Brutus emotions towards Caesar identical with his own."

⁹Though Cassius does not succeed in arousing in Brutus the base passions that motivate him, it becomes clear later, as a number of critics have observed, that he has been successful in touching Brutus's pride. The greatest temptation of Brutus, Ronald Berman points out, "A Note on the Motives of Marcus Brutus," *SQ*, 23 (1972), 199, "is to relive the glory of his ancestor." Thus, as R.A. Foakes says, "An Approach to *Julius Caesar*," *SQ*, 5 (1954), 269, Brutus acts in the name of honor and in the light of the reputation of a former Brutus as he sets out to kill the name of Caesar. And, as Rene E. Fortin indicates, p. 343, he remains blind throughout the play to the manner in which Cassius has exploited his pride.

¹⁰There has been very little interpretive comment on the cobbler. The most detailed assessment of his significance is that of Marvin L. Vawter, " 'Division 'tween Our Souls' ": Shakespeare's Stoic Brutus," *Shakespeare Studies*, 7 (1974), 184, who says that the puns in the cobbler episode "form a miniature paradigm of the play's central thesis: that there must be unity in a man, as in a state, before the good is achieved. Failing to live by their 'awl'--their entire spiritual being, sensitive and rational--Brutus and Caesar have bad soles that should be mended, not destroyed." Rene E. Fortin, p. 345, sees thematic significance in the way in which Murellus misconstrues the meaning of the cobbler's words and then chastizes the commoners for misconstruing the nature of Caesar. These details, he says, introduce "the central theme of the subjectivity of truth."

¹¹As we follow the progress of Brutus, it becomes apparent, Norman Rabkin observes, "Structure, Convention, and Meaning in *Julius Caesar*," *JEGP*, 63 (1964), 246, that he has a "striking number of qualities" in common with Caesar.

¹²Brutus's virtue, as Gordon Ross Smith indicates, "Brutus, Virtue, and Will," *SQ*, 10 (1959), 367, covers a "thoroughly egotistical willfulness." And, as L.S. Champion points out, *Shakespeare's Tragic Perspective* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1976), p. 93, it is his "naive idealism" which makes him blind "to his own egotistical nature."

¹³The irony of 'Brutus' interpretation of the assassination and the structural significance of the ceremonial motive in the play have been set forth in Brents Stirling's seminal essay "'Or Else Were This a Savage Spectacle,'" in *Unity in Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), pp. 41-54.

¹⁴The italics are mine. The ironic implications carried by the pun may have been inspired by the following excerpt from the "Life of Caesar" which describes the contrasting reactions of the people and Caesar to the tribunes who pulled down Caesar's images (Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, p. 81): "The people followed them rejoicing at it, and called them Brutes: because of Brutus, who had in old time driven the kings out of Rome. . . Caesar was so offended withall, that he deprived Marullus and Flavius of their Tribuneshippes, and accusing them, he spake also against the people, and called them Bruti. . .to witte, beastes. . ."

¹⁵Cf. L.C. Knights, "Shakespeare and Political Wisdom: A Note on the Personalism of *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*," *Sewanee Review*, 61 (1953), 47, and Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 56.

¹⁶Cf. D.J. Palmer, p. 400, who says that "Cicero's comment in the storm scene is a reflection which reaches far beyond its immediate context."

¹⁷Norman Rabkin, p. 251, has pointed out that "Shakespeare used revenge tragedy to create the moral universe, the philosophical base of his play."

¹⁸Though I agree with Professor Schanzer, p. 65, that the quarrel scene is in many ways one of the most important scenes in the play, I do not feel, as he does, p. 63, that Brutus' tragic disillusion with the kind of world he has helped bring into existence is implicit in it. I do, however, agree with those critics who see a tension in Brutus which results from his attempt to justify a monstrous error. As William R. Bowden points out, "The Mind of Brutus," *SQ*, 17 (1966), 60-61, Brutus' criticism of Cassius under the circumstances presented in this scene, like his earlier rationale for the assassination, calls attention to the intellectual weakness of Brutus, his failure to see himself and his mental processes objectively.

¹⁹G. Wilson Knight, *The Imperial Theme* (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 74, points out, for example, that "Brutus. . .can scarcely with any justice both blame Cassius for accepting bribes and for refusing himself money." Such a reliance on his friend to provide the means which will enable him to avoid a course of action that he considers morally repugnant, Derek Traversi says, *The Roman Plays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), p. 64, seems "more than a little disingenuous."

²⁰The point I make in this connection runs to some extent across the grain of what appears to be a critical consensus. Sir Mark Hunter, "Politics and Character in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*," in *Transactions of the Royal Society*, ed. Sir Francis Younghusband (London: Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 130, states that our final thought is not of the dead man's "appalling misdeed, or of the miserable fatuity of his political creed, but of the human virtues which made his life beautiful and beloved. . . ." Adrien Bonjour, *The Structure of Julius Caesar* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1958), p. 23, makes the point that Brutus's practical mistake in

allowing Antony to live is an indication of his moral caliber; thus, he says, "we feel that Antony's tribute is perfectly deserved." Robert B. Heilman, "To Know Himself: An Aspect of Tragic Structure," *Review of English Literature*, 5 (1964), 43, does not believe that Brutus's "humourless self-content becomes evident enough to constitute a judgement on him" primarily because of Antony's final praise and Octavius' acceptance of it. And Ruth M. Levitsky, "The Elements Were so Mix'd," *PMLA*, 88 (1973), 244, who believes that Professor Hunter's correction of the overidealization of Brutus has now become overcorrected, asserts that the "final encomium pronounced over his dead body" indicates clearly that Brutus's nature is one that distinguishes him from all other men.

²¹I do not believe that we are meant to overlook at this moment a point which Professor Schanzer, p. 50, has made in another connection: that "Brutus, the harmonious man, is... shown to us throughout the first part of the play as rent by dischordant emotions, and later, in the quarrel-scene, 'like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh.'" Nor do I believe that we are far enough away to dismiss from our minds the import of the bloodbath--a ritual which, as Leo Kirschbaum observes, "Shakespeare's Stage Blood and Its Critical Significance," *PMLA*, 64 (1949), 524, "emphasizes the disorder in the man."

THE GOBBOS AND CHRISTIAN "SEEING" IN *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE* by Michael W. Shurgot

Old Gobbo and his son Launcelot are two of the minor characters in *The Merchant of Venice* who, according to a recent critic, "appear prominently for a scene or two, and are then forgotten."¹ Amid the rush of events in a play that transports us rapidly from the harsh commercialism of Venice to the fairy-tale splendor of Belmont, such minor characters may indeed be forgotten, but a scrutiny of their appearance together in II.ii suggests that their brief meeting is more than just a comical interlude among the larger concerns of the play.

II.ii opens with Shakespeare's humorous adaptation of a vestige from the morality plays: Launcelot's blundering rendition of his "debate" with his "conscience" about whether or not to quit serving Shylock. While his conscience bids him stay with Shylock, the "fiend" tempts Launcelot to abandon Shylock who, Launcelot comically claims, is "the very devil incarnation."² Two points are immediately relevant here: first, Launcelot's conscience, or lack thereof, is significant later in the scene during his conversation with his father; second, Launcelot's characterization of Shylock as a "kind of devil" indicates an explicitly un-Christian attitude towards him that, to varying degrees, is shared by all the other Christians in the play--a subject to which I shall return momentarily. Following Launcelot's "debate," his father enters carrying a basket and asking directions to "master Jew's"; and, as the old man is "more than sand blind, high-gravel blind," Launcelot decides to "try confusions" with him, thus continuing the overtly comic tone initially established by Launcelot's monologue.

The obvious comedy of this scene, however, ought not obscure the thematic relevance of what follows to the rest of the play. In his basket Old Gobbo carries a dish of doves which we learn he intends for Shylock, who at this point Old Gobbo believes is still Launcelot's master: "How dost thou / and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. / How 'gree you now?" (II.ii.105-07). Old Gobbo's present for Shylock is the traditional Christian symbol of peace, and he tenders it without any apparent motive other than the desire to give freely of himself and without expecting any remuneration. His offer to Shylock emulates the true Christian spirit of giving, of which the archetype of Christ Himself, and Gobbo's present of the symbol of peace to the man whom all the other Christians in the play consider their enemy exemplifies perfectly Christ's exhortation in the Sermon on the Mount: "loue ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, loking for nothing againe, and your reward shalbe great."³ Thus Old Gobbo, though physically blind, "sees"

clearly the spirit of Christ's teaching, for his offer to Shylock is the ideal example in the play of Christian giving and charity. The other characters who, in one way or another, give of themselves, do so either because, like Antonio, they expect their loans to be repaid; or because, like Portia, their giving has a specific, objective purpose, as she offers her wealth to extricate Antonio from a lethal bond in order that all concerned, including herself, may escape a serious threat to their happiness. Further, Old Gobbo, an "honest exceeding poor man," recalls, in his giving, Christ's assertion "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20), and, perhaps more significantly, Christ's warning "Surely it is easier for a camel to go through a needles eye, then for a riche man to entre the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:25). Ironically then, in a work that so persistently examines "the conflict between the mechanisms of wealth and the masterful, social use of it," and "the anxiety that dogs wealth,"⁴ Old Gobbo, in his material poverty the play's most humble character, appears spiritually the most wealthy; for among the characters of *The Merchant*, it is he who best exemplifies Christian brotherly love and who seems most likely to reap an eternal reward.

But the fate of Old Gobbo's gift is to be other than he intended, and its destiny symbolizes the imperfect, commercial world that the personae of this play inhabit. Launcelot's reaction to his father's offer to Shylock indicates his own self-interest and summarizes simultaneously the attitude of the other Christians towards Shylock:

My Master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famished in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your gift to one Master Bassanio, who, indeed, gives rare new liveries: if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground. O rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer. (II.ii.112-20)

Launcelot's remark about his ribs recalls the traditional hungry servant of Roman Comedy, but indicates also that he desires to use his father's gift for his own purposes. More importantly, Launcelot, who has physical sight, is blind to his own slander of Shylock and to the Christian nature of his father's giving. As Bassanio enters, speaking in the hurried, business-like manner characteristic of life on the Rialto, Launcelot urges his father to offer his gift to Bassanio; obligingly, and I should think a bit confused by Old Gobbo's remarks to Bassanio, "I have here a dish of doves, that I would bestow / upon your worship, and my suit is--" (II.ii.143-44). However, he cannot finish his sentence, for Launcelot interrupts to explain in his typical, blundering manner that his father is offering Bassanio this gift because he (Launcelot) wishes to serve him. Thus Old Gobbo's gift, which he originally intended as a gesture of Christian peace towards Shylock, is now redirected by Launcelot to serve his own self-interest; and, in Launcelot's admittedly practical but

nonetheless self-centered appropriation of his father's charity, one witnesses precisely the kind of exchange in which one gives in hopes of repayment or personal gain that is characteristic of the other figures in the play.

Significant for its absence in this little encounter among Bassanio and the Gobbos is Launcelot's "conscience" with which he was so concerned earlier in the scene. Launcelot has no misgivings about his own use of his father's gift, and he seizes upon it as a way toward securing a better employment for himself; indeed, his request to Bassanio is successful, for Bassanio orders one of his servants to give Launcelot "a livery / More guarded than his fellows'" (II.ii.163-64). Launcelot, who thinks Shylock merits a halter rather than a present, reflects the prevailing attitude towards Shylock of the other Christians in the play, and while we do not condemn Launcelot for his actions, we should note how explicitly un-Christian his own view of Shylock is and how different it is from Old Gobbo's. Launcelot cannot "see" either the implicit exemplariness or the Christian symbolism of his father's gift, and, spiritually blind in his own lack of charity towards Shylock, he reacts selfishly and unkindly to his father's example. As Christ warned, "seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive" (Matt. 13:14), and His warning might serve as a gloss on Launcelot's actions in II.ii and on the other Christians' treatment of Shylock throughout the play.

The un-Christian sentiment of Launcelot's "My Master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter" resounds throughout the play: early on, Antonio bids Shylock lend him money "not / As to thy friends . . . / But . . . rather to thine enemy" (I.iii.133-36); in II.viii Salerio and Solanio unmercifully ridicule "the villain Jew['s]" confused passions about the loss of his daughter and his ducats; and at the end of the trial, after Shylock has been humiliated "in open court," Gratiano rebukes him with "Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten [godfathers] more / To bring thee to the gallows, not the font" (IV.i.402-04). Further, when Salerio and Solanio are discussing Bassanio's departure for Belmont, Salerio says of Antonio, "A kinder gentleman treads not the earth" (II.viii.35). However, if Antonio is so "kind," one must wonder why he baits Shylock, admits he has spat upon him and called him "dog," and claims he will so insult him again. Shylock is certainly not a "tragic victim," nor are his actions in the play defensible: his horrid wish that Jessica were "dead at [his] foot," his professing that he hates Antonio "for he is a Christian," and his barbaric insistence on a pound of Antonio's flesh exhibit clearly that "hatred and lust for vengeance" have violated his human nature.⁵ Yet the Christians in this play hardly do unto Shylock as they would have him do unto them; like Launcelot, they are blind to their own lack of tolerance towards one they consider an alien, and their communal attitude regarding him is very far indeed from the Christian charity and reconciliation exemplified by Old Gobbo's gift.

Nor is their treatment of Shylock after the trial truly charitable. Although the Duke spares Shylock's life, the Christians virtually destroy his financial resources, and Antonio's keeping one half of the fine levied against Shylock to "render it, / Upon his death, unto the gentleman / That lately stole his daughter" (IV.i.383-85) countenances Lorenzo's furtive abduction of Jessica and, by implication, their using to purchase monkeys the ring that Leah gave to Shylock. Further, Antonio's final condition upon reprieving Shylock's fine is certainly the cruelest irony of the play, for in demanding that Shylock "presently" become a Christian, Antonio demands that he join a community of men who keep slaves, spit on Jews and call them "dog," and assist their comrades in surreptitiously stealing the daughters of those whom they choose not to love. Like Launcelot in II.ii, the other Christians of the play are blind to their *lack* of Christian charity even in the midst of rendering what they *consider* charity and mercy; Launcelot's "My Master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter" echoes throughout the trial scene in ways that the principal characters do not realize.

Although *The Merchant of Venice* achieves in general the harmonies that several critics have described,⁶ nonetheless within these larger harmonies exists a disquieting irony about the relative Christianity of the play's Christians, for they hardly approach that kind of true Christian charity imaged in Old Gobbo's simple gift of a dish of doves in II.ii. Gobbo's offer of the traditional symbol of peace contrasts sharply with the treatment afforded Shylock by his other fellow Venetians. True, Portia's eloquent appeal to mercy is thwarted only by Shylock's primitive notion of "justice," by his maniacal insistence on his ludicrous "bond," but her scrupulous interpretation of the "Law" to defeat Shylock unequivocally indicates the kind of world Shakespeare creates in this play. For were Gobbo's example followed more often by men on the Rialto, both Christians and Jews, such rigid exegesis of the laws that bind men in Venice might not be necessary. "My Master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter"; "Seing ye shal se, and shal not perceiue."

Thus Launcelot and Old Gobbo, while admittedly minor characters in *The Merchant*, nonetheless dramatize in their few moments together both the prevailing attitude of the play's major characters towards Shylock and an ideal against which that attitude should be judged. Furthermore, their brief meeting on stage suggests that if we forget completely such minor characters in the midst of a great Shakespearean play, we fail to appreciate how relevant to his larger concerns Shakespeare could make even his smallest scenes.

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Notes

¹Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (London: Methuen, 1974), p. 121.

²II.ii.28. All textual references are to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, rev. ed., Hardin Craig and David Bevington, eds. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1973).

³Luke 6:35. All Biblical references are to *The Geneva Bible* (1560).

⁴C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 170, 171.

⁵Peter G. Phialas, *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), p. 161.

⁶See, for example, Sigurd Burckhardt, "The Merchant of Venice: The Gentle Bond," *ELH*, 29, No. 3 (September, 1962); rpt. in *Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp 206-36; Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978); and Barbara K. Lewalski, "Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 13, No. 3 (Summer, 1962), 327-43.

THE CATASTROPHE OF *THE TEMPEST* By Gary Schmidgall

Where the catastrophe in *The Tempest* occurs is clear. If one accepts the classical definition of the term as "the change or revolution which produces the conclusion of a dramatic piece," then the catastrophe is this exchange between Prospero and Ariel:

Ariel. Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.
Prospero. Dost thou think so, spirit?
Ariel. Mine would, sir, were I human.
Prospero. And mine shall.
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passions as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. (V. 1. 17-30)

After Prospero announces in the first line of V that his project has gathered to a head, we are poised to learn how he will treat all the enemies now lying at his mercy. The announcement made in the lines just quoted is, to paraphrase Antonia, an act whereof what's to come is epilogue. What tension the play has generated quickly evanesces, and in the long denouement that balances the long exposition of I, ii, all promises are fulfilled. Prospero's intention to act benevolently finally does encompass all the circumstances of his "swift business."

With what inflections are these lines to be spoken? How should this interchange be projected? Every staged version of *The Tempest* must spring from the answers to these questions. This passage is important because one cannot indicate to an Ariel or a Prospero how it should be performed without first answering several other questions that arch over the entire action. For instance, are there any events in the preceding action that are unanticipated by Prospero? What precisely ought to be the source of the play's tension? Can we distinguish between genuine and artificially created suspense in the play? More generally, how does Prospero's mind work?

Decisions about these questions must be implied by the way Prospero and Ariel perform lines 17-30 of V. One can be even more specific: does Prospero ask his first question out of serious need to know or bemused condescension? Does Prospero really know already the goal of his action

before it commences? The grandeur of the play hangs on how the director answers these questions. There is a preferable and -- I cannot forbear saying -- obvious answer to both. The debate over these questions is not new and (because there is no manifestly right or wrong solution) will surely continue. I would not now be embarking on yet another "reading" of *The Tempest's* catastrophe, except that I have encountered a remarkable looseness of talk and a continuing division of opinion among commentators who discuss it. Consider, for example, this statement made by Alvin Kernan in *The Playwright as Magician* (1979): "Only late in the play does Prospero learn from his won art -- literally from the voice of his fancy, Ariel -- the necessity for sympathy [V. i. 27-30 quoted]" (p. 140). Professor Kernan holds the view, against which I shall be arguing below, that as the action unwinds we witness an educational process. Other implications of Kernan's phrasing are worth questioning: that Prospero learns the ethical lesson of the play through his "fancy" rather than through his exercise of "nobler reason"; that Prospero's art is to be equated with his fancy rather than (as is usually thought) with the knowledge that his fancy, Ariel, gives a local habitation and social effect; and that, late in the play, Prospero suffers an intellectual crisis. I will return to these suppositions.

Kernan's brief observation exemplifies the considerable school of opinion which holds that *The Tempest* dramatizes the on-going and culminating education of a Renaissance ruler and that, as a necessary corollary, Shakespeare intended his audience to be genuinely uncertain and therefore in suspense to learn Prospero's ultimate intentions toward his betrayers. Many stand on the other side and consider the action to present an ethical *fait accompli*.¹ Judging from the lateness of Kernan's observation, the issue can be regarded as still hanging in the balance and still worthy of further exploration.

Such stark controversy on a central critical question is remarkable -- though not unusual in Shakespeare criticism. Perhaps more surprising is the number of writers who, in one way or another, skirt the issue entirely or decide it by default while pursuing other matters. They often begin on the fence, and, unconscious of their precarious position, tumble unwittingly on one side or the other. Frank Kermode, feeling as an editor a perhaps justifiable timidity, appears in his discussion of the catastrophe to be one such fence-sitter:

The exode or catastrophe is finally prepared by the *persona ad catastropham machinata*, who is Ariel. He is technically responsible for the comic nature of the catastrophe, since he makes Prospero say he will offer his enemies forgiveness rather than revenge. Otherwise, of course, the catastrophe would be tragic. But Ariel's act is so unnecessary in view of the already existing comic motive--the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda--that it is once

more hard to avoid seeing his persuasion of Prospero as a point at which the classical structure tears through the texture of the play. On the other hand, the conversation about forgiveness, unlike Prospero's agitation at the prospect of Caliban's rebellion, has some motivation in the structure of the play's ideas, since it was necessary for the prince to overcome the turbulence of his own passions. (lxxv)

Clearly, Kermode was doubtful how the questions I have posed should be answered. He says that Ariel is "technically" responsible for the catastrophe, but that seems to imply an unspecified real responsibility. He then suggests that Ariel's act is "unnecessary," but can a catastrophe properly so called be unnecessary? Kermode writes of Ariel's "persuasion" of Prospero, but the airy spirit's six-word response hardly constitutes persuasion. There is reference to what Prospero must learn but no indication of chronology: has this been a long process or, as implied by Kermode, does a light suddenly go on? Most puzzling, though, is Kermode's exact sense in saying that Ariel "makes" Prospero say he will renounce revenge. Is *force majeure* implied? Who, in other words, is the factor of whom in the dialogue of the catastrophe?

Kermode's pristinely untendentious discussion of the climax of *The Tempest* resolves nothing. Admirable perhaps in a scholarly editor, this careful puzzlement would be of little help to a director. For a director must decide who learns what from whom, when, and to what end. To aid such a person, I would like to marshal in the following pages some reasons for assuming that the catastrophe of *The Tempest* has long been in Prospero's mind, that he learns nothing from Ariel, and, more broadly, that Prospero's character does not change in the course of the action. Here then is one way to perform the role of Prospero.

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Note, first, the almost juridical solemnity with which Prospero announces his intentions in lines 25-30. This is a familiar pose for the magician. Throughout the action he has established himself as the one character in the play who exists in and understands the actual world on stage. He acts frequently as the bringer of certainty on this island where "all torment, trouble, wonder and amazement" (V. i. 104) seem to mingle. Put in grammatical terms, Prospero is the declarative central figure in a subjunctive ethical and artistic environment. This pattern is apparent from the very first exchange:

<i>Miranda.</i>	<i>Had I been any god of power, I would</i>
	<i>Have sunk the sea within the earth...</i>
<i>Prospero.</i>	<i>Be collected:</i>
No more amazement.	(I. ii. 10-14)

And it prevails throughout the play. Near the end Prospero chides,

I here *could pluck* his highness' frown upon you,
 And justify you traitors: at this time
 I *will tell* no tales. (V. i. 127-9)

Prospero is, with the possible exception of Prince Hal, the least uncertain character Shakespeare ever created. Paradoxically for a magician, his most memorable lines are of the kind that disperse rather than create amazement: "No harm"; "Our revels now are ended"; "'Tis new to thee"; "I'll deliver all." Surely his most stunning declarative line, though, is uttered in response to Ariel's subjunctive, "Mine would, sir, were I human": "And mine shall."

Because Prospero is throughout the play an exemplar of the well and (at last) fully educated ruler, he lives in the real ethical world. His characteristic mode of utterance is declarative, just as Macbeth's is a vacillating subjunctive: "If 'twere done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly" (I, vii. 1-2). Critics, therefore, who find Prospero's "And mine shall" hedged with prior doubt and the result of a psychomachia something less than three hours old must necessarily vitiate the power of his conviction that forgiveness is indeed preferable to revenge. These critics also oblige themselves to discover moments in the action when this psychomachia manifests itself. I have not found any such moments convincingly established.

The view that Prospero overcomes the turbulence of his own passions during the play also serves to vitiate an effect that Shakespeare appears to have been anxious to achieve. This is the sense that Prospero's project, animated by an ethical *idea*, is carefully and artificially discovered according to artistic principles. By the time Prospero comes to speak of "the sole drift of my purpose" it is hard for me to look back and find moments when this momentous purpose -- which is ultimately the renovation of the Dukedom of Milan and Kingdom of Naples -- is truly jeopardized. Shakespeare scrupulously creates a sense of urgency, precise synchronization, and gathering momentum. This care is particularly notable in speeches at the end of (III. iii. 88-90), the end of (IV. i. 262-5), and the beginning of V (V. i. 1-3) that enforce this sense of ineluctable artistic energies successfully concentrated. To suggest that the protagonist comes but lately or accidentally to his "sole drift" or that his function as *metteur en scene* changes somewhere in mid-course to adjust to a sudden ethical transformation works at cross-purpose to the unified classical structure of *The Tempest*.

It is also important to emphasize that the *fait accompli* which Prospero announces in V is, as Shakespeare's audience would have expected, a benevolent one. We learn early from Prospero (and there is no reason to doubt him) that he was once reputed "for the liberal Arts / Without a parallel" (I. ii. 73-4). His action in the play bears this out. He never oversteps

the principles of classical humanism and becomes a progressively more emphatic exemplar of the king-becoming graces. Alonso says at about the midpoint of the action that "the best is past" (III. iii. 51), but for the audience the irony of this remark is obvious. The best is clearly yet to come. The audience, along with Prospero, is hoping for (*pro + spero*) a speech that will, when the right time comes, sound something like, "Let us not burthen our remembrance with / A heaviness that's gone" (V. i. 198-9).

The catastrophe of *The Tempest* is unique, for it is a catastrophe that changes nothing but crowns everything. One cannot speak of it in the usual terms of a stunning turn of events that throws all preceding action into a new and finally ordered perspective. Rather, an image from architecture seems more appropriate: it is the keystone of an arch that has been a long time a-building, and a highly ornamental one at that. The sentiment Prospero utters is a well-known commonplace of humanist political ethics, one that had figured crucially in some of the most important literary works of the Renaissance.² Prospero's speech is the final and, as will be seen, highly theatrical indication that he is indeed what he has hitherto promised to be, the model of a peacetime ruler.

Shakespeare's catastrophe, then, is eminently rhetorical. David William has written that "the climax of *The Tempest* is a moral decision,"³ but perhaps a more precise statement is necessary. The climax is not so much the decision itself as the superbly timed *revelation* of that decision. The catastrophe, like so many other aspects of the play, is daringly artificial in the Renaissance sense of the word -- daring in that Prospero's speech is but the first of three consecutive set-piece speeches which perform exactly the same function of announcing Prospero's immediate intentions (the other two are "Ye elves of hills" and "A solemn air"). Any two could be cut without damage to the plot. The sheer magnificence of Shakespeare's supererogation here is perhaps what led Lytton Strachey to refer to V's "whirl of rhetoric."⁴

Subsumed in the whirling rhetoric are all the moral tensions, human conflicts, or psychic distress that one normally associates with a catastrophe. What -- if not an ethical system, an individual's hubris, or a social contract -- does the action of *The Tempest* test and resolve? The hint of an answer lies in Prospero's candid explanation to Miranda and Ferdinand at the opening of IV:

All thy vexations
Were but trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test. (IV. i. 5-7)

The vexations of the neophyte lovers are inconsequential, almost risible (especially Ferdinand's ordeal by woodpile). Prospero, however, has found them necessary in order to make "uneasy" the "swift business" of their love-

at-first-sight. Here is a paradigm for the actions of Prospero and, by extension, Shakespeare in the play as a whole. In order to test and confirm the love (that is to say, the *engagement*) of his audience, Prospero has had to become the author of various "vexations" -- all of them ultimately spurious because they do not affect in the end his simple, predicted, and predictable action. It is not Prospero's humanity or his ethical priorities that stand the test but rather the project itself. This project finally succeeds as Ferdinand does, "strangely" and wonderfully.

The false obstacles prepared for the young lovers should make us skeptical of Prospero's other vexing manipulations. Some are obvious, for instance Ariel's tantalizing banquet for the wandering royal party. Others are more subtle, subtle enough, at least, to have led many critics and some directors to assume that the vexation ought to be projected as real for the audience.⁵ When they do this, they necessarily derogate Prospero's powers of manipulation and challenge his position as a dramaturgical "god of the island." The most famous vexation of the play occurs when the masque is suddenly dispersed (IV. i. 139ff), and this scene is worth examining carefully with an eye to Prospero's power of manipulation. This scene helps to emphasize an aspect of Prospero's character generally lost sight of amid talk of him as masque producer and playwright. I speak of his talent as a player. In fact, I will venture that this scene cannot be properly performed without assuming that Prospero's vexation is more thespian than real.

First, however, why is the masque dispersed? It is hard to accept the given reasons at face value. "I had forgot" the foul conspiracy of Caliban, says Prospero. What of the nature of the plot? Prospero is already aware of it; Ariel, after all, overheard it in III, ii and has presumably reported it to his master in the meantime. And at the moment the masque suddenly ends, the plot is obviously lacking its *sine qua non*, a Prospero napping in his cell. The "minute" of the plot has in fact not almost come.

At any rate, the four lines (139-42) in which Prospero speaks his aside and bids his spirits depart have a remarkable effect on Ferdinand and Miranda, who observe but apparently do not hear him:

Ferdinand. This is strange: your father's in some passion
That works him strongly.

Miranda. Never till this day
Saw I him touch'd with anger, so distemper'd.

Surely Prospero expects his aside to be noticed by his audience of two.⁶ An actor, I should think, would find it very hard to achieve the effect described by the lovers without considerable theatrical exertion. By line 146 Prospero's commotion appears to have communicated to Ferdinand, while Prospero himself just as suddenly (and therefore suspiciously) becomes calming:

You do look, my son, in a mov'd sort,
As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.

The Revels Speech follows, for me, all too quickly. Prospero may expect Ferdinand and Miranda to believe his transit, within but three lines, from extreme anger to the soothing, philosophical gravity of the Revels Speech. But can Shakespeare have expected or intended us to believe it? I doubt it and think, rather, that he would prefer us to admire Prospero's thespian versatility. I prefer to think that Prospero "performs" his speech just as he performs the fury preceding it, and that Prospero has all along intended a premature resolution of the masque. There is in the Speech such poise, such condescending, schoolmasterly moralizing, such fineness of phrasing, that it is easy to suspect this exquisite epilogue has been prepared for the occasion—just as the epilogue at the end of the play was prepared.⁷

When Prospero has made his famous equation of dreams with human existence, he says, "Sir, I am vex'd." Ferdinand and Miranda apparently believe him, but I do not. This is said merely to usher the two young people out of the action and to gain some necessary privacy. Prospero protests too much of *weakness*, *infirmity*, his *old brain*, and *beating mind* to be taken quite seriously. The epithets are astonishingly inept. Prospero's subsequent interview with Ariel ought to heighten our incredulity. Were he genuinely vexed, Prospero could now pluck his highness's frown upon Ariel, who has just made the only "mistaking" of his career in the play. But Prospero, with another chameleon-like change of emotion, is instead all politeness and business:

Prospero. Come with a thought. I thank thee. Ariel: come.
Enter Ariel
Ariel. Thy thoughts I cleave to. What's thy pleasure?
Prospero. Spirit,
We must prepare to meet with Caliban.
Ariel. Ay, my commander: when I presented Ceres,
I thought to have told thee of it; but I fear'd
Lest I might anger thee.
Prospero. Say again, where didst thou leave these varlets?

I have paused over this vexatious and most famous scene in the play because it shows not only Prospero the playwright but also the role-player and manipulative interlocutor. When Professor Kermode writes of the "apparently unnecessary perturbation of Prospero at the thought of Caliban" (p. lxxv), he is confirming what I have here argued, that this anger is not psychologically plausible or convincingly explained by details of the plot. This perturbation *is* necessary, however, as part of the continuing display of Prospero's power of simulation, his extraordinary power to assume and discard various functions, postures, and attitudes at will as his project

requires. Here is my favorite example of this power: "[Aside] It works. [To Ferdinand] Come on. / [To Ariel] Thou hast done well." (I. ii. 496-97).

The culminating example of this power is the catastrophe. Prospero is no less a performer when he announces that he will prefer mercy to revenge than when he speaks of "our little life," of his "potent Art," or of the potential despair of an unapplauded "ending." Almost all of the significant speeches in *The Tempest* are placed with great care for the dramatic impact. Sometimes this care is obvious, sometimes subtle. No doubt, Shakespeare expected his auditors to be aware of such manipulation according to their varying intellectual sophistication. This does not alter my conviction, though, that the real excitement of a performance of the play should lie in our observation of this manipulation. We should resist interpretations that tend to diminish Prospero's position as the play's supreme manipulator. We should also resist the notion that, in the catastrophe, Ariel *prompts, persuades, teaches, or makes* Prospero to utter his decision for mercy or that Ariel is anything but an unformed, instrumental force at his master's disposal.

This view will appear more convincing if a few further comments are made about the relationship between Prospero and Ariel. First, there is nothing in the play to suggest that Ariel is more than his master's agent. Though the style of Ariel's descriptions of his own actions is invariably and delightfully his own, the actions themselves are all bidden by Prospero. There is but one brief instance of independent "thought" on Ariel's part, and even this brief instance betrays him into his only admitted faulty behavior (IV. i. 167-9). It seems, therefore, perverse to entertain the notion that Ariel is an active part of the supposed learning process in Prospero. Quite the contrary, Shakespeare soon establishes Ariel as an unwitting part of the *audience's* learning process: I refer to Prospero's manipulation of Ariel by means of rhetorical questions.

Consider Prospero's first interview with Ariel, which begins with an interrogation about the storm. The ostensible reason for this is Prospero's need to know, but of course Prospero cannot be surprised that his charge has been performed "exactly" by Ariel, for he is a perfect servant. "I have done thee worthy service; / Told thee no lies, made no mistakings" (I. ii. 248-49), Ariel boasts; Prospero does not object. Besides, Prospero knows the answers to his questions. He has already assured Miranda that "not so much perdition as an hair" has befallen the ship's company and scarcely needs to learn from Ariel that "not a hair perish'd." The real reason for the questioning is the audience's need to know. Ariel's poetic elaborations are necessary because the audience requires to be apprised of certain unstageable aspects of the rescue and its immediate aftermath. The audience must also learn something of the history behind the semi-contractual bond of service between Prospero and Ariel. This is effected in a fierce but essentially rhetorical interrogation. Ariel

cannot get a word in edgewise, so eager is Prospero to answer his own questions: "No"; "I do not, sir"; "No, sir"; "Sir, in Argier"; "Ay, sir."

A similar though more subtle process takes place in the catastrophe. Prospero's questions are rhetorical ones. To suggest that Prospero asks "Dost thou think so, spirit?" with anything other than frank condescension is to suggest that he is for the first and only time asking Ariel what he *thinks*. Such an act, aside from turning into a thinker the play's embodiment of fancy or imagination, would be utterly uncharacteristic of Prospero, who is the supremely self-conscious and self-sufficient thinker of the play. Perhaps in his "Mine would, sir, were I human" Ariel unwittingly steals some of Prospero's humanist thunder. Hence the latter's quickness in adding "And mine shall" -- and hence the derisive sting of his second and more obviously rhetorical question. For this question Prospero sensibly allows no time to respond. The great announcement is then made. It allows no discussion, and Ariel departs expeditiously.

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My position is best summarized by asking what is to be gained by renouncing the suspense of wondering whether or not Prospero will act the part of an ideal Renaissance monarch? What is gained if we reject the sentimental notion that Ariel (however naively or unwittingly) catalyzes a genuine transformation in Prospero? Much is gained, for by rejecting these easy ways out we can assure at the play's climactic moment the illusion that Prospero is still above and in control of his art, that he is more than equal to the magical qualities of moral and gubernatorial perfection that his "liberal arts" have given him. The quality of Prospero's mercy is thus not strained, not compelled by external powers; his mercy issues from perfected knowledge empowered by his nobler reason. *The Tempest* focuses our attention on the social use of perfect moral knowledge. A stage Prospero can convey this central notion only if the lines of the catastrophe are delivered with the charismatic dead-pan of complete control.

Joseph Conrad wrote once, "I would not grudge...the proud illusion that will come sometimes to a writer: the illusion that his achievement has almost equalled the greatness of his dream."⁸ Just such grudging occurs when critics or directors trade away Prospero's proud illusion for a meretricious dramatic suspensefulness at just the moment when the illusion is ratified. In their haste they grudge prematurely; they forget that there will be a time later in the last act when the illusion and the suspense of the dramatic even are finally relinquished. Shakespeare himself performs a similar function in his epilogue. But as long as Prospero is wearing his magic robes and carrying the staff and book, we should rest happy simply to wonder at Shakespeare's embodiment of perfect moral, political, thespian, and dramaturgical power.

There is a fine hubris in suggestions that, prior to his own catastrophe, Prospero is not above his tricky spirit, his own project, his liberal arts, or his art. One imagines him responding to those who make these suggestions with the Jovian condescension of Shakespeare's other archetypal figure of intellectual control: "Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery" (*Hamlet*, III. ii. 362-66). After Prospero discases and presents himself as the Duke of Milan, all mystery vanishes. But before he discases, the impersonator of Prospero must convey the presence of a similarly unpluckable mystery and a similar intellectual dominion. Within the vast bourn of his character must pervade an awareness that it contains undiscoverable country. The catastrophe of *The Tempest*, like every other of Prospero's scenes, should be played for the feeling of something withheld from the grasp of the audience and for the feeling of infinite rather than finite power. We should not grudge Shakespeare this theatrical illusion.

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Notes

¹Among those who believe real psychomachia is involved are J. Dover Wilson (*The Meaning of The Tempest* [1964], pp. 14-18); Robert Egan (*Drama within Drama* [New York, 1975], p. 111); L.C. Knights ("The Tempest," in Richard Tobias and Paul Zolbrod, editors, *Shakespeare's Late Plays: Essays in Honor of Charles Crow* [Athens, Ohio, 1974]); and Alvin Kernan (*The Playwright as Magician* [New Haven, 1979]). David William can be taken as speaking generally for this view: "Up to this moment, there must surely be some doubt in his mind (and hence, the audience's— about the kind of dispensation to be made" ("The Tempest on the Stage," in *Jacobean Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 1 [1960], p. 145).

Among those who think the decision for mercy is all along a *fait accompli* are E.M.W. Tillyard (*Shakespeare's Last Plays* [London, 1938], pp. 54-55); Don Cameron Allen (*Image and Meaning* [Baltimore, 1970], p. 80); John Fraser ("The Tempest Revisited," *The Critical Review* 11 [Melbourne, 1968], p. 74); and Bertrand Evans (*Shakespeare's Comedies* [Oxford, 1960], pp. 333-34).

All quotations from *The Tempest* in this essay are taken from the Arden edition of Frank Kermode (Cambridge, Mass, 1954).

²I will include two of the many possible examples one might choose. In his "moral" note to the forty-second Canto of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, John Harrington draws attention to a *locus classicus* on the temperate and forgiving ruler, Cicero: "Tully in his Oration *pro Marcello* hath many excellent sayings to this effect to praise *Caesar* and all such as being able to revenge yet rather choose to forgive, as in one place he saith...To overcome the passions of the minde, to bridell ones anger, to moderate the victorie, etc. who doth these things I compare not him to the best sort of men, but I liken him to God himselfe" (p. 490). In V. v. of Giovanni Battista authorial figure Carino offers this advice:

Anger was never in a noble mind
 A furious tempest: but a gentle wind
 Of Passion onely, which but stirs the soul,
 (Where Reason still doth keep her due comptroll)
 Lest it should grow a standing pool, unfit
 For vertuous action.

(II. 447-52, Richard Fanshawe translation)

Guarini adds this note to these lines in his 1602 edition of the play: "From this passage we see clearly that it is possible for anger to be good and evil; one is not obedient to reason, the other is. One is furious, and the other is very complaisant to the rational appetite" (p. 224 recto, my translation). See also *The Faerie Queene* (2. II. 2) and Calderon de la Barca's *La vida es sueno* (II. 3216ff) for similar passages. Ben Jonson makes the present point at length in his *Timber: or Discoveries*, lines 1430-99.

³David William, "The Tempest on the Stage," *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* 1 (1960), p. 134.

⁴Strachey's phrase occurs as he expresses a view of the catastrophe that radically understates the "drama" of the moment (just as those who see a genuine transformation overstate it): "The denouement itself, brought about by a preposterous piece of machinery, and lost in a whirl of rhetoric, is hardly more than a peg for fine writing" (*Books and Characters* [London, 1922], p. 61). What I am suggesting here is not so much a compromise between these two extremes as a third alternative.

⁵An ingenious *Tempest* staged at Stanford University in 1975 achieved considerable suspense and tension by offering a paranoid schizophrenic Prospero. It was not Shakespeare's magician, but the performance was riveting -- if only because this mental dysfunction is always riveting, on stage or in real life.

⁶Samuel Johnson, in 1765, was the first editor to place an "aside" in line 139. Johnson also finds Prospero's stated reason for ending the masque problematic: "and yet, if we turn to the occasion of his disorder, it does not appear, at first view, to be a thing capable of moving one in *Prospero's* circumstances. The Plot | is that | of a contemptible *Savage* and two drunken Sailors,

all of whom he had absolutely in his power. There was then no apprehension of danger" (*The Plays of William Shakespeare*, Volume 1, p. 68).

⁷I have seen a production of *The Tempest* in which the masque was cut and the Revels Speech used in place of the actual epilogue.

⁸"Books" (1905), in *Notes on Life and Letters* (1921; rpt, Freeport, New York, 1972), p. 10.

NORTHUMBERLAND'S "PERSUASION": REFLECTIONS ON *RICHARD II*, II.I.224-300

By Paul Gaudet

In his study of *Richard II*, A. R. Humphreys refers to "Northumberland and his allies" at the end of Act II, Scene i as "cautious at first but soon vigorous and practical."¹ His remark is characteristic of the prevailing view of this brief French scene. It assumes that Northumberland, Willoughby, and Ross are like-minded individuals from the start and that they can be spoken of collectively. Secondly, it implies that the nobles' sharing of confidences constitutes a choric summing up of the case against Richard. Viewed in this way, the "scene" announces a national emergency and is the play's overture to what Tillyard calls "the vigour of strong and swift action,"² represented in the attitudes of the nobles and incarnated through the arrival of Bolingbroke. Although Derek Traversi and Robert Ornstein see a different thrust -- a general falling away from the patriotic ideals of Gaunt and the emergence of a "new" world of self-interested political scheming -- they too treat the "scene" as a meeting of equals who seek only the reassurance to unburden their secret thoughts.³

What these different conclusions have in common is the sense that the "scene" is essentially static: Shakespeare has placed it there either as the final validation for opposition to Richard or as a revelation of degenerated politics in a world without Gaunt. Yet the "scene" does have an inherent dramatic quality which has not been explored. If one considers the dramatic sequence and language of the nobles' exchange, it becomes evident that Shakespeare has crafted a miniature drama of political seduction in which Northumberland is the central character. The "scene" demonstrates how Northumberland, already aligned with the House of Lancaster, cunningly manipulates the fearful Willoughby and Ross to circumvent the restraints of tradition and conscience and to join him in support of Bolingbroke.

Before the private mutterings which follow Richard's exit, Ross and Willoughby have been a silent audience to the King's vindictive dismissal of Gaunt and his prudent counsel. Along with Northumberland, they have witnessed Richard's callous expropriation of Bolingbroke's inheritance and York's troubled warnings to his nephew. In Richard's violation of the principle of succession and the hereditary rights of the nobility, they have apparent cause to fear for themselves; and from Richard's blunt threat to Gaunt, they have every reason to see themselves as helpless, knowing that only a privileged uncle can give contrary advice and live:

Now by my seat's right royal majesty,
 Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son,
 This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
 Should run thy head from thy unreverent shoulders.⁴

In short, Richard's behaviour has placed the three nobles in a common situation and has generated similar feelings of self-concern. However, Shakespeare has subtly differentiated their allegiances. Ross and Willoughby are initially associated with Richard as members of his court party, along with Bush, Bagot, and Greene, whereas Northumberland has been attendant on Gaunt off-stage, entering only mid-way through the scene as the messenger of his death. Thus there is nothing unexpected when Northumberland fails to exit with Richard. Ross and Willoughby, on the other hand, must separate themselves from the King's retinue, an act of dissociation which the subsequent conversation will fulfill.

What follows is a process in which Northumberland converts doubtful allegiance into active resistance. His act of persuasion has four stages:

- i) he first approaches the sounds of his audience (II.224-37);
- ii) he then identifies the problem, implicating Ross and Willoughby and stimulating their fear and discontent (II.238-61);
- iii) he establishes a communal and desperate need for a solution which only he can provide (II.262-76);
- iv) and, finally, he proposes a remedy, offering a rationale which sublimates personal motives in the aura of public service and excites Ross and Willoughby to action (II.277-300).

The stage actions which frame the "scene" are a measure of Northumberland's success. The "scene" begins with an image of tentative separation from Richard's court; it ends with Ross and Willoughby exiting in zealous fury to join Bolingbroke⁵

Presumably Northumberland has observed signs of discontent which encourage him to approach Ross and Willoughby, yet he must do so tentatively, unsure of how much he can disclose without prejudice. His opening probe, "Well, lords, the Duke of Lancaster is dead," is a careful statement of fact which commits him to nothing; but it is sufficient to draw a reaction which he can develop. The replies of Ross and Willoughby indicate that their minds are very much on what they have just observed. They restate Bolingbroke's right to succession and lament the deprivation which has left him a nominal heir, at best. Ross's "heart is great, but it must break with silence, / Ere't be disburdened with a liberal tongue." Willoughby is anxious "to *hear of good*" (italics added) towards Bolingbroke, but contributes nothing. Similarly, the only "act" of which Ross is capable is to offer pity. As

their language indirectly signifies, obedience to the King leaves them impotent in the world of present fact; it is not a subject's right to undo what the King has done.

This sense of duteous, though unwilling, constraint links Willoughby and Ross with the traditional values of Gaunt who had urged suffering obedience and passivity to the Duchess of Gloucester and to his son (I.ii; I.iii). With Gaunt's death, however, habitual allegiance has been strained to the breaking point, as York's words have testified:

How long shall I be patient? ah, how long
Shall tender duty make me suffer wrong?

If you do wrongfully seize Herford's rights,
.....
You pluck a thousand dangers on your head,
You lose a thousand well-disposed hearts,
And prick my tender patience to those thoughts
Which honour and allegiance cannot think. (II.i.163-64; 201-08)

Under the strain of this inner conflict, York chose to withdraw, while Willoughby and Ross envision themselves as helpless. Northumberland, on the other hand, sets about to summon the unthinkable into existence without seeming to compromise honour and allegiance.

In initiating seditious talk, Northumberland has been cautious to leave the first statements of opinion to those on whom he is working. At the same time, he has managed to insinuate the rationale for redressing Bolingbroke's suffered wrongs and the means of force by which such restitution would be achieved: first, through his appeal to the rule of justice which is presently lacking in England ('Richly in both, *if* [italics added] justice had her right'); and, secondly, through his threat of death to anyone who breaks confidence. Justice and force, in that order, are the keystones of the argument which Northumberland proceeds to urge on Willoughby and Ross.

Having assured himself of their disposition--sympathetic but circumscribed by convention -- Northumberland must now attempt to free the "liberal tongue" which duty makes them suppress. His tactic is to convince Ross and Willoughby that the open expression of their sentiments constitutes a more true exercise of duty than does silence:

Now afore God 'tis shame such wrongs are borne
In him, a royal prince, and many mo
Of noble blood in this declining land;
The king is not himself, but basely led
By flatterers; and what they will inform,
Merely in hate, 'gainst any of us all,
That will the king severely prosecute
'Gainst us, our lives, our children, and our heirs.

Northumberland's speech is a masterful piece of rhetorical manipulation. By generalizing Bolingbroke's wrongs to "many mo / Of noble blood," he recasts his listeners as victims of Richard's injustice and participants in Bolingbroke's shame. They can no longer be pitying bystanders of another's misfortune; Bolingbroke's plight is now theirs. Northumberland also hints at a connection between the fate of the oppressed nobility and the state of the country, "this declining land," thus fashioning a context which effectively blurs any distinction between self-interest and patriotism.

Northumberland's handling of Richard's guilt -- significantly Ross and Willoughby have not dared to name the King -- exhibits a similar cunning. He first postulates a dichotomized Richard: "The king is not himself." The Richard who acts in contempt of England's laws and traditions is a *false* king, a mere projection of his favourites' perverted will. Implicitly, there is another Richard, a better man who is capable of being a *true* king, to whom they owe their allegiance. By attributing Richard's abuses to an aberrant self, Northumberland has offered a formula in which opposition to the "momentary" king can be seen as service to the "essential" king. He has further removed Richard from direct blame by making the royal favourites the major issue. It is only in this speech by Northumberland and in subsequent allegations by Bolingbroke that the favourites appear to have any control over Richard's practices and policies and to be jealously inimical to the English nobility.⁶ Yet Northumberland's characterization of the favourites has its strategic effect. His provision of an external cause for Richard's injustices ensures that any complaint against Richard's kingship is ultimately an indictment of the favourites, not of Richard himself. As a final spur to Ross and Willoughby, Northumberland intensifies their personal identification with Bolingbroke. They too have cause to fear the confiscation of their patrimony and, perhaps, the obliteration of their lineage.

While essentially playing on their emotions of shame and fear, Northumberland has appeared to offer Ross and Willoughby "reasons" for speaking out against Richard. Such open criticism would be consistent with their duty as faithful subjects and in the best interests of the King. Their immediate response demonstrates that Northumberland's formulation of the problem has achieved its purpose. In enumerating the ills of the realm, they refer to the extent of Richard's alienation from commons and nobles alike, to the frequency and novelty of his taxation devices, and to the wanton and ignoble spending which has left Richard a bankrupt king and necessitated his financial exactions. However, their brief catalogue of complaints is curiously ambivalent. Their successive statements seem designed to complete the case against Richard, since they are primarily a factual account of what the King has done. On the other hand, their charges are uniquely financial, revealing how successfully Northumberland has activated their covetous self-interest.

Our direct experience of Richard may validate their claims, but we also have witnessed how their courage to speak has been prompted by Northumberland's manipulation of their baser instincts and by his own increasingly pointed criticism of the dissolute king. If Ross and Willoughby can now speak of Richard as a "broken man" and a robber, it is because Northumberland has insinuated his way into their thoughts.

With his incisive summary of what they have concluded so far, "His noble kinsman -- most degenerate king," Northumberland initiates another shift in their conversation. He has passed the critical phase of his persuasion. He has succeeded in transforming conscientious silence into open censure, while disguising conspiracy as the pursuit of justice. He will shortly exploit the same rationale to translate the "liberal tongue" into a treasonous action that strikes at the king's power without appearing to do so; but first he must convince the nobles that immediate action is imperative. His principal obstacle is still the incipient passivity of Willoughby and Ross. They had felt themselves helpless to alter Bolingbroke's condition; now they would stand by idly in anticipation of their own destruction. In counterpointed lines which alternate verbs of perception ("we hear . . . We see") with verbs of action in the negative ("Yet seek no . . . And yet we strike not"), Northumberland underscores the illogic of those who see but fail to act. However, he also goes further than simply describing the disastrous consequences of conservative inaction. His use of nautical metaphor, with its evocation of a sailor's native instinct to take precautionary action in a storm, is consistent with the other appeals to natural and dutiful behaviour which he has been urging on the two nobles.

As if to express their imitative and dependent nature, Shakespeare has Ross echo Northumberland:

We see the very wrack that we must suffer,
And unavoids is the danger now,
For suffering so the causes of our wrack.

But the apparent similarity in form serves only to reiterate the basic distinction between Northumberland and the others: where Northumberland implies that action is both possible and necessary, Ross stresses the inevitability of their fate and the impossibility of effective action. In his characteristic resignation, Ross has recognized that their present danger is the direct consequence of not having acted sooner. This temporal excuse for non-resistance, with its hint of self-responsibility, gives Northumberland his final leverage. His terse contradiction, "Not so," dismisses Ross's sense of the irreversibility of events and leads to his promise of life, "even though the hollow eyes of death / I spy life peering," an

expression which is ominous in its ambiguity.⁷ Northumberland is now prepared to assuage the anxieties which he himself has awakened and aggravated but not before he frustrates the nobles' desire to hear by feigning the nervous caution which had been genuine in Ross and Willoughby in the early moments of their talk. In playing the hesitant, Northumberland baits them into the position towards which he has been maneuvering from the start. His "tidings of our comfort" must come in response to the eager supplications of Willoughby and Ross; Northumberland must appear to be answering their need (a need which he has mainly fashioned), while, in fact, he has imposed his more aggressive will and drawn them into an identification with his thoughts.

It is only when Ross asserts a common identity, "We three are but thyself," that one can begin to speak collectively of the three nobles. Willoughby and Ross have been won, and Northumberland has emerged formally as their spokesman: his words will be their thoughts. However, Ross's avowal unwittingly makes explicit the dominance which Northumberland has exhibited from the opening line. Not only has he initiated their exchange, but he has at every moment controlled its tone and direction towards his intended conclusion. Now that he has harnessed and redirected the discontent of previously loyal subjects, he can confidently disclose his secret information. The decisive transition, "Then thus," introduces Northumberland's climactic set speech. Rhetorically, it marks a significant change in the discussion. It breaks the normative pattern of short dialogue, and its length is mimetic of Northumberland's to achieve control. Simultaneously, tentative probing and covert expression give way to the soaring rhetoric of heroic resolve. This affective shift into the heroic mode seems designed to sweep away all remaining doubts in the excitement which accompanies the launching of a lofty adventure. Northumberland's information about Bolingbroke's expedition, a hearsay account remarkable for its precise detail, is virtually an epic catalogue of men and arms. Such a citation of substantial and reputable forces both projects an image of noble action and reassures Ross and Willoughby that they would be far from solitary in aiding Bolingbroke. Just as the power is honourable and sufficient, the time will be right and secure, since Bolingbroke's landing awaits the strategic moment of Richard's departure for Ireland.

All that remains is the actual call to arms. Here Northumberland insists on altruistic motives, carefully deflecting attention from the private issues which he has stirred. He takes as assumed his prior arguments about the king who is misled by noxious parasites and his identification of Bolingbroke's rights with England's political health. He then casts his final appeal as a double goad. In repetitive and cumulative propositions, he challenges Ross and Willoughby to prove their patriotism by joining Bolingbroke in a

restorative action. Then, as one last turn of the screw, he adds an oblique taunt of cowardice and unmanliness should they decide to remain passive and secret. They respond predictably with two statements, urgently brief, as they rush off to fulfill their new-found duty:

Ross. To horse, to horse! urge doubts to them that fear.

Will. Hold out my horse, and I will first be there.

Willoughby and Ross have been essentially passive throughout the "scene" until this final moment when they catch the fever of active opposition to their country's (and their own) harms. Northumberland has successfully worked them into an enthusiasm which has no doubts and which asks no questions of itself. They are now capable of performing what only moments before had been unspeakable.

The extent of their transformation can be gauged from their next appearance when they actually join forces with Bolingbroke. Significantly, it is Northumberland who announces their arrival:

Here come the Lords of Ross and Willoughby,
Bloody with spurring, fiery-red with haste. (II.iii.57-58)

They have become his eager dogs of war. Then, taking their cue from Bolingbroke, and with an unconscious irony, they speak of his fortuitous coming in financial terms. Finally, they are quick to add their voices, after Northumberland, to Bolingbroke's self-justification before York. From suffering, but obedient, members of the King's court, they have become self-serving militants, "carvers" of their own way. In York's words, they "Cherish rebellion, and are rebels all" (II.iii.146).

I have been arguing that the essential form of this "scene" is a precisely structured act of persuasion; that its immediate sense resides in Northumberland's conversion of passive and helpless resentment into fervid action; and that its emotional rhythm involves a pattern of mounting tension -- between the nobles' sense of constraint and Northumberland's calculated pressuring of their suppressed emotions--which culminates in a potentially violent release. What the "scene" *says* is only a part of what it *shows*. Certainly, there is a compressed recitation of the nobles' grievances, but it does not constitute a choric summary of Richard's misgovernment. The speakers are far from disinterested commentators, as Northumberland's sounding of venal impulse reveals. Because his solicitude for Richard's proper kingship is cast as a persuasive tactic, an audience cannot be sure that Northumberland's words are genuine, and not just a verbal inducement to edge Ross and Willoughby towards an action to which he himself is already committed. Patriotism may well be nothing more than a convenient

abstraction, the public face of self-interest, whether it be conscious or naive. This is all the more likely, since Northumberland's accusation of the favourites is dramatically unsubstantiated. On the contrary, the play has demonstrated that the problem rests not with flatterers who impose wrong choices on a weak Richard, but with a self-violating king who insists on his own way, in spite of any counsel, good or bad. For these reasons, an audience is quite justified in greeting Northumberland's desire to "shake off our slavish yoke" as an ominous forecast of Richard's undoing. This ambivalence and uncertainty are rooted in Shakespeare's structuring of the "scene". He has invented a meeting of nobles to extend the play's formulation of political dilemma; but he has compromised the integrity of that formulation by introducing his audience to the character of Northumberland and the alternative political world which he represents.

The "scene" is Northumberland's in every conceivable way. Shakespeare has given him a numerical dominance in lines spoken (forty-seven of seventy-seven). The distribution of lines and their pattern tend to isolate Northumberland and group Willoughby and Ross, so that Northumberland initiates each exchange, to be answered usually by the two nobles in tandem, sometimes by one only. Northumberland is responsible for all logical advances and shifts of mood. His set speech is rhetorically distinct in the "scene", and it is substantially the last word: the closing ejaculations are simply an "Amen". He is also the only character named in the conversation, while Ross and Willoughby remain an anonymous entity for a theatre audience.

Ross and Willoughby are distinguished from Northumberland not only by the externals of the text but also by the substance of what they perceive and say. They are no more like Northumberland than Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Hamlet's equals. They essentially react to Northumberland. They may repeat or expand what he says, but they are always led by him. Their statements are confined to what is; Northumberland's lead towards what might be. They look to Northumberland for answers about the King's bankruptcy and their own safety; and only Northumberland is privileged with information concerning Bolingbroke's return. The crux of the "scene", however, is that Northumberland works a change in the attitude and behaviour of Ross and Willoughby. Their deterministic vision of political reality gradually gives way to Northumberland's initiative to mold events to his own will. Their sense of duty and conscience becomes blurred by his sophisticated arguments. At the beginning of the "scene", they are a vestige of Gaunt's traditionalism, but less firm in their convictions and more susceptible to their fears; by the end, they have become Northumberland's men.

What Shakespeare has done in this "scene" is essentially his own creation. He has departed from his principal source, Holinshed, who treats

Northumberland as a loyal supporter of Richard prior to his greeting of Bolingbroke at Doncaster, a liaison which occurs sometime after Ross and Willoughby have already been among the first lords to welcome Bolingbroke at Ravenspurgh.⁸ Instead, Shakespeare seems to have conflated several details from the accounts in Froissart and *The Mirror for Magistrates*. Froissart narrates at some length how Northumberland's words of discontent come to Richard's attention, how his counsellors urge the chastisement of treasonous intent, and how Northumberland is banished, after refusing a royal order to attend the King.⁹ The lament of "Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland" in *The Mirror for Magistrates* probably draws on Froissart, but presents Northumberland as an innocent victim, suppressing any reference to his outspoken criticism of Richard and defining his banishment as the result of slanderous counsel. Because of his public shame, Northumberland becomes the thing he was named; and in his hatred he conspires to overthrow Richard and transfer the throne to Bolingbroke.¹⁰ Froissart's account may have suggested that Northumberland's profound dissatisfaction and rebellious disposition preceded his banishment,¹¹ while *The Mirror for Magistrates* provides the only reference to Northumberland as a powerbroker responsible for Bolingbroke's kingship.

Shakespeare's incorporation of these elements into the character of Northumberland, the lack of any dramatic evidence to validate his factious jealousy of the favourites, and Shakespeare's staging of his capacity to fabricate compelling reasons out of partial truths, when taken together, point to a deliberately magnified function for Northumberland as Bolingbroke's henchman. In addition to rallying support for Bolingbroke's return, he serves successively in the play as the spokesman and oath-swearer for Bolingbroke's "lawful" intentions (II.iii), as his unceremonious legate (III.iii), as his self-appointed arresting officer and the official accuser of Richard (IV.i), and as the grim conveyor of Richard to prison (V.i). In Bolingbroke's silence, as in his absence, Northumberland is his public surrogate.¹²

Northumberland's conversion of Ross and Willoughby takes approximately five minutes in performance, yet it is an important transitional moment in the play which justifies and undercuts, simultaneously, the anticipated insurrection against Richard. In their temptation and capitulation, Shakespeare brings to a head the problem of a nation's response to an unjust king and draws together the play's previous images of suffering obedience. Willoughby and Ross share Gaunt's vision of a degenerated state; but, whereas Gaunt had appealed to Richard to be self-correcting, they are going to intervene, under the influence of Northumberland, to force correction on their king. Their pragmatic resolution is both a conclusion to the first movement of the play (Richard's misgovernment) and an introduction to the second movement

(Bolingbroke's aggression), serving also as a contrasting reflector for Richard's insistent fatalism in the face of danger. By telescoping historical events and time, Shakespeare has made Northumberland's persuasion a direct sequel to the death of Gaunt and an immediate consequence of Richard's confiscation of Bolingbroke's hereditary rights. The dramatic effect is to emphasize the falling away from Richard which Gaunt had prophesied, to depict the erosion of Richard's outer court as a prelude to the reports of mass desertion and the disintegration of his inner court in the next scene.

Shakespeare has started to dramatize a nation's rush for political change. At the same time, by expanding and darkening Northumberland's character and by adding an invented "scene" of covert manipulation, he maneuvers his audience to reflect critically on what the new agents of power represent. In setting before his audience the birth of a rebellion, Shakespeare has made essential its components: the clear-sighted manipulator, the well-intentioned followers, deluded as to their motives and their status. He has also stressed its intrinsic contradictions. There is no scene of external motivation in which a formal delegation of English nobles solicits Bolingbroke to aid his country. Similarly, Shakespeare follows Holinshed in avoiding any mention of Bolingbroke's overt design of usurpation. Yet both public necessity and personal inclination are obliquely present at the end of this scene. Because it is announced after the nobles have been persuaded by Northumberland, Bolingbroke's arrival seems to be in answer to their need, even though his action and Northumberland's knowledge of that action chronologically precede the dramatized moment of the nobles' support. As the scene ends, we realize in retrospect that the indignant complaints against Richard are, for Ross and Willoughby, the justification of a course of action that may be necessary in time, and, for Northumberland, the rationalization of a seditious action that has already begun. By having the two nobles assume Northumberland's identity, Shakespeare has underlined the death of a political ideology: he has symbolized a general turning away from the habits of mind and belief which have valued the inviolability of kingship and have tolerated Richard. The fact that Northumberland has had his way with Ross and Willoughby, that they have been his dupes from the start, throws a pall over the new political order before it has begun. Whatever its promise, it will be a world in which power works through concealed motives and rationalized means.

It is through the accumulation of such charged occurrences as Northumberland's persuasion that Shakespeare's meaning is characteristically formed in *Richard II* (and in most of his subsequent plays). Avoiding the univocal perspective of moralized history, Shakespeare's dramatic art cultivates a series of counter-tensions in which the overt

"statement" of a scene is interpenetrated by its implied qualifiers. This is true not only for the central dialectic of Richard—Bolingbroke, but also for those minor scenes and passing moments which deepen our illusion of being immersed in the human dilemmas of political change and perplex our apprehension of historical process. Accordingly, Shakespeare modifies the just concerns of Ross and Willoughby with the methods and disguised intent of Northumberland. He deliberately complicates an otherwise straightforward emblematic scene by having us receive the Gardener's moral through the on-stage audience of the Queen. He also gives us the poignant action of the groom, who, with some difficulty, has sought out his former master and king in prison. This is another example of how Shakespeare repeatedly challenges and puzzles his audience to delve into their experience of the play and its meaning. His use of this virtually anonymous figure of simple devotion directs us to think of the behaviour of other former subjects: of the callousness and cruelty of the London citizens which York narrates in Act V, Scene ii; of York's own substitution of private sentimentality for public allegiance as an instinctive salve of conscience; or of those who would purge in Richard what they refuse to see in themselves. To wrench our feelings even further, Shakespeare shows us Richard's growing humanity as he intuits the coming danger and instructs the groom to take his safe leave. Such dramatic moments seem gratuitous in that they contribute little or nothing to the action of the play; and yet Shakespeare makes them crucial to the play's significance, revealing the profound and intricate in the simple and fleeting. They are an integral and uniquely characteristic part of Shakespeare's stagecraft. Only through close attention to the *full* Shakespearean text, its small scenes as well as its big, its casual gestures as well as its declarative events, and to the whole range of textual signifiers and their interplay, can we hope to arrive at a sense of those pressures and currents which are the basis of compelling Shakespearean performance.

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Notes

¹A. R. Humphreys, *Shakespeare: Richard II, Studies in English Literature*, No. 31 (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 42.

²E. M. W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944; rpt. New York: Collier, 1962), p. 293.

³Derek Traversi, *Shakespeare From "Richard II" to "Henry V"* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 24-25; and Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 112-13.

⁴William Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, ed. Peter Ure, *New Arden Shakespeare* (London: Methuen, 1956), II.i.120-23. All further references will appear in the text.

⁵Although various commentators have referred in passing to Northumberland's emergence in this "scene", Wilbur Sanders, *The Dramatist and the Received Idea: Studies in the Plays of Marlowe & Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 164, and F. W. Brownlow, *Two Shakespearean Sequences* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), p. 102, seem to be the only ones to suggest a link between Northumberland's manipulative intent and a new sense of grim omen in the play. I differ from Sanders and Brownlow in arguing that an audience's tendency to see Northumberland as representing a political world of rationalized power and double-talk is rooted in Shakespeare's handling of this "scene", in his creation of a deliberate tactical sequence in Northumberland's inducements. We do not need to know what the character becomes in the play in order to mistrust him on first meeting. For a contrasting opinion, see E. W. Talbert, *Elizabethan Drama and Shakespeare's Early Plays: An Essay in Historical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), pp. 310-11. Although he mentions Northumberland's seizing the initiative at the end of this scene, and goes on to discuss the increasingly ominous portrait of Northumberland, who receives most of the audience's antipathy from the fall of Richard, he nonetheless insists that Northumberland's dialogue with Willoughby and Ross "seems to have been designed for a choric effect" to underline Shakespeare's anti-Richard bias (p. 311).

⁶Shakespeare seems to have departed from his printed sources which consistently attribute Richard's downfall to the injustices and prodigality urged upon him by his parasitic favourites. He has Bushy, Bagot, and Greene in several scenes, but provides no dramatic corroboration for the charges levelled against them. It is Richard, not the "flatterers", who devises new forms of taxation and anticipates the confiscation of Gaunt's wealth (I.iv). Subsequently, we see them as faithful and trusted attendants to the Queen--she is confiding the heavy sadness of her "inward soul" (II.ii) — and as courageous and unswerving in their commitment to Richard even in the face of death (III.i). It is Northumberland (and Bolingbroke after him) who makes the favourites a major issue for Richard's opposition. Our full experience of the play may leave us with our doubts.

⁷References to the potential irony and ambiguity of this phrase and Northumberland's subsequent proposals can be found in Traversi, p. 25; Sanders, p. 164; and Brownlow, p. 102, among others. Whatever honourable name it might wear and however much it seeks life, Northumberland's remedy will be characterized by death: it not only will bring about the execution of royal favourites and the singular assassination of an anointed king, but, as Carlisle prophesies, it will transform England into "The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls" (IV.i.144). However, I disagree with Brownlow that Northumberland's words represent the introduction of death into the play. There is a deeper structure of meaning here. Certainly Northumberland's statements have secondary proleptic reverberations for an audience, but this does not justify discarding a statement's intended meaning in favour of its ironic undertones. Northumberland is completing and emphatically pointing his earlier reference to those who would "securely perish" and Ross' expectations of inevitable wrack and unavoidable danger. In this instance, death is both the worst of what they have to fear from Richard and an internal state, that particular despair which passivity breeds. Nor is this the first time in the play that the passive acceptance of suffering is imaged as death. When the Duchess of Gloucester reluctantly puts aside her desire for vengeance, it is as if she has resigned from life:

Farewell, old Gaunt; thy sometimes brother's wife
With her companion, grief, must end her life. (I.ii.54-55)

Desolate, desolate, will I hence and die . . . (i.ii.73)

In the next scene, Mowbray likens his banishment to a "speechless death" and takes his leave "To dwell in solemn shades of endless night" (I.iii.172 and 177). The notable exception is Bolingbroke who rejects his father's advice, choosing instead to confront his sorrow in order to cure his pain Northumberland's image of hope is an example of how Shakespeare's meaning often resides in a cognitive and affective tension, not so much a balancing as a counterpointing of extremes. Northumberland's association of death with a passive response to experience is consistent with the play's earlier images of obedient suffering. Just as Bolingbroke's directness will allow him to boast of being "a true-born Englishman" rather than merely "a journeyman to grief" (I.iii.309 and 274), so "life", for Ross and Willoughby, can only reside in active resistance which, in its turn, will bring death on a large scale to the English nation. Ironically, both fatalistic acceptance and resolute confrontation are imaged by Northumberland's figure of a death's-head. This compressed paradox is an epitome of the play's pattern of experience in which the promised regeneration of Bolingbroke's "new-com spring" (V.ii.47) simply replaces a guilty king with a guilty king, political faction with civil war.

⁹Northumberland is listed as one of many lords to answer the summons to the Great Parliament of 1397: "All the which earles and lords brought with them a great & strong power, euerie of them in their best arae, as it were to strengthen the king against his enimies," *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, II (1587; London: J. Johnson, 1807), 839. In 1398, the power of both houses of parliament were granted "to certeine persons." Northumberland's name is ninth in a list of fifteen (843). The next reference to Northumberland is to his welcoming of Bolingbroke (853). There is no indication of earlier friction between Northumberland and Richard or of Northumberland's having plotted against Richard on behalf of Bolingbroke. Edward Halle's account differs from Holinshed's only in that Ross, Willoughby, and Northumberland greet Bolingbroke simultaneously, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1550; rpt. Menston, Eng.: Scolar Press, 1970), fol. vv.

⁹Sir John Bourchier (Lord Berners), trans., *The Chronicle of Froissart*, ed. W. P. Ker (London, 1903; rpt. New York: AMS, 1967), VI, 347-49.

¹⁰William Baldwin et al, *The Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (1938; rpt. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960), pp. 133-34.

¹¹Goeffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, III (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 369, states that Shakespeare "knew from Holinshed that the Percies disobeyed an order from Richard to come to him, but retired to the north." I have been unable to find in Holinshed any mention of Northumberland's disobedience. He does identify Northumberland and his son as "wardens of the marches against Scotland" (853), but in its context this is hardly more than a reference to their role as defenders of England's border against Scotland.

¹²The critical elaborations on Richard's "Northumberland, thou ladder" (V.i.55) are numerous. For example, Irving Ribner identifies Northumberland as Bolingbroke's machiavellian tool, "Bolingbroke, A True Machiavellian," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 9 (1948), 179; John Palmer, *Political and Comic Characters of Shakespeare* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 146, speaks of Northumberland's "suave iniquity" and brands him as "a man in whom disloyalty is almost a matter of principle"; and M. M. Reese argues that Bolingbroke "cannot escape being corrupted by the low and selfish motives of men like Northumberland," *The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Edward Arnold, 1961), p. 229. It is interesting to note that before Richard's private indictment of Northumberland, Shakespeare has already hinted at the jealous wrangling to come. Immediately after Richard has resigned his crown, Northumberland repeatedly insists that he read a public confession of his crimes. When Richard resists with a mounting indignation and penetrating bluntness that threaten to deface the proceedings, Bolingbroke prudently instructs Northumberland to "Urge it no more" (IV.i.271). What follows is a telling theatrical moment. Northumberland offers his new king disagreement instead of obedience: "The commons will not then be satisfi'd" (IV.i.272). Although this nascent challenge to Bolingbroke's authority is cut short by Richard's retort and by the arrival of the looking-glass, the mask of contentment has slipped long enough for us to see Northumberland's chafing will which refuses to serve.

THE CYCLE OF SIN IN SHAKESPEARE'S LATE PLAYS

By W. B. Thorne

Despite obvious dissimilarities, Shakespeare's four late romances are variations on a single theme. In *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* and *The Tempest*, the Shakespearean concept of spiritual regeneration assumes local habitation and name in a dramatic formula exploited sequentially. Within a tragicomic structure, these late plays explore the stages of a process of sin, guilt, penance and regeneration or reconciliation, and objectify it in a plot formula to imply its universality.¹ Behind their spiritual "progress" is a familiar Shakespearean notion. Human action makes for good or evil, the results of which have significance not only for those creating the actions but for others as well. Further actions may attempt to negate evil, but only through penance, suffering, and the integrative influence of children and love may atonement and spiritual rebirth be achieved. This elemental pattern, early evolved in the histories and tragedies, is formalized with ritual overtones in the late plays. As is abundantly clear in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, the imagery of regeneration enriches the development of this theme as formula, and the mythic dimensions of all four are too pervasive to be ignored.

Shakespeare probably thought of the late plays as a group. E.M.W. Tillyard argues forcefully for the notion that Shakespeare conceived of the history plays as units or cycles in a national epic.² Some of the same patriotic, religious, historical, or pseudo-historical conceptions may also be found in the late romances,³ as well as the implications of a series or group. Various commentators have noticed the similarities of their plots, citing that they span the generations,⁴ possess the "same general scheme of prosperity, destruction, and recreation,"⁵ and seem to take their origin from "old festival plays"⁶ or religious drama.⁷ Still others have recognized their similarity of theme.⁸

These shared characteristics stem from a common plot and symbol pattern too intrinsic to be coincidental.

Each of the late plays concentrates on a phase or several phases of the formula pattern. Each insists on the communality of the spiritual journey. And each locates the experience within the spirit of a protagonist who, by the end of the play, not only is a member of the older generation but has reached archetypal proportions. Shakespeare also examines the relationship of the generations, transferring the goodness of the young to the aging protagonist to cure his spiritual half-life. This scapegoat action is especially clear in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, where the young lovers figure symbolically as

the old reborn.⁹

Pericles and *The Winter's Tale* dramatize both the youth and the maturity of the central character. Although *The Tempest* does not, the long expository second scene of the first act accomplishes the same result, by suggesting Prospero has already undergone the experience of spiritual recovery. *Cymbeline* also presents the earlier life of the protagonist through simple exposition but shifts attention away from the king to the scapegoat sufferings of his daughter and sons.

Because of these differences, the latter two plays offer a useful comment on the dramaturgical processes of the group. In returning to a classical mode of structuring action in *The Tempest*, Shakespeare clarifies his intention, which may be seen as exemplifying the general purpose of the late plays.

In reintroducing the "banished duke motif," Shakespeare indicates that the focus of the play is on Prospero but not as a suffering Lear or Othello, as in *The Winter's Tale* or *Pericles*. The center of interest instead is the mechanics of the reconciliation the protagonist makes with his community through the media of magic and young lovers. Presumably, the resolution of Prospero's desire for revenge has taken place before the play commences. As in Marston's *The Malcontent*, Shakespeare's protagonist is more interested in reform and regeneration than revenge.

Accepting the restrictions of the unities, Shakespeare begins the play apparently *after* Prospero has overcome his wrath; as a result *The Tempest* records the reconciliation rather than the penance of the formula. The emphasis, therefore, is not on the original rift, as it is in *The Winter's Tale*; nor is it on the internal struggle of the protagonist, as in *Pericles*. Because the play rests solidly on the mechanics of reconciliation, a compressed time scheme is more significant in *The Tempest* than in the looser romantic structure of the other late plays.

In *The Tempest*, the young lovers are counters in a spiritual chess game manipulated by the magician-priest. Prospero in fact combines the symbolic roles of Cerimon and Paulina, in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, who act as priestly physicians to the spiritual health of the king. Forced to present his exposition in the controversial second scene of Act One, Shakespeare introduces the Sebastian-Antonio complication, the unholy trinity of Caliban-Stephano-Trinculo, and finally the love of Miranda and Ferdinand. If he had not imported dynamic, present evil into the action, through two attempts to usurp power (one in the burlesque comedy subplot), *The Tempest* would have been serene indeed, dealing exclusively with past evil. As it is, the evil in the play is not worked out of Prospero himself. It is seen instead as an active principle in the universe, and the character who experiences rebirth during the action is Alonso, a stand-in for Prospero, whose function is similar to the symbolic role of little Mamillius in *The Winter's Tale*.

The love of Ferdinand and Miranda is both thematic necessity and unifying symbolic force in the overall pattern, as is the love of the young lovers in the other late plays. In *The Tempest*, however, the flight to the woods characteristic of the early comedies is transformed into the magic experience of the entire play: the mysterious shipwreck, the charmed adventures on the Enchanted Isle, and the ultimate return to reality, Milan, and thoughts of death. The opposition of dramatic worlds is similarly changed. The "green world"¹⁰ of a magic island removed countless leagues from physical reality provides the setting, and the basic opposition is between the forces of spiritual good, controlled by Prospero, and the forces of evil, personified in Antonio, Sebastian, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo.

Penitential suffering appears in all four plays. In *Pericles*, it occupies the bulk of the play. In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes' penitential sterility, the curse of the Waste Land in the tragic sequence, necessitates the healing romantic misrule of the last two acts. In *Cymbeline*, Posthumus in penance does good works by battle to act as a regenerating force. And in *The Tempest*, the entire island experience, for both Prospero during his exile and the shipwrecked court of his evil brother, may be seen as penitential in character and outcome.

Whereas *Pericles* follows the process of penance itself, *The Winter's Tale* avoids it by the choric device of Time and the sixteen year hiatus before the summer action of the last two acts concludes the play. As a consequence, *The Winter's Tale* explores the cause of the Waste Land period of Leontes' life and then leaps forward in time to record the sequence of reconciliations dominating the last act. In these two plays, the young grow older, and their own children effect the regeneration of the conclusion.

In *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*, however, the father figures are already older. In *Cymbeline*, the lovers are even already married, and the father's banishment of Posthumus initiates the conflict, so that the play focusses on the scapegoat mission of Imogen and her husband, which generates the final reconciliation. In *The Tempest*, Prospero, too, is already old. But as the magical choreographer of reconciliation, he effects the regeneration of Alonso, who experiences the sea baptism of sin and grief during the play.

It seems evident from this analysis that the four late plays employ the formula of sin-penance-regeneration with varying emphasis, each stressing different phases of the spiritual experience.

The structure of these late plays is still based on the polarity system of the middle comedies,¹¹ though sophisticated through a series of interlocking complications. *The Winter's Tale*, for example, is so thoroughly founded on the symbolic implications of a "winter-summer" progression that many scholars suggest it falls into complementary halves, a tragic movement and a comic movement which may or may not be artistically fused. With its masque-like combination of tragedy and comedy, and its obvious relationship

to earlier plays, *The Winter's Tale* presents the most completed example of the themes of rebirth and reconciliation. Leontes' irrational passion creates disharmony in his family and kingdom, as well as in his personality. Reminiscent of the great tragic figures of Shakespeare's middle period, he brings upon his head the curse of the gods, which, like Lear's upon Goneril, is to remain childless. Through voluntary penance and spiritual rebirth, he must work out of his soul the evil he has engendered through false vision of his world.

Though Shakespeare is no longer interested in exploring the psychopathology of jealousy, Leontes and Othello are brothers under the skin. In *The Winter's Tale*, however, the interest of the play lies in the effects of jealousy not only on the protagonist but, more important, on his kingdom. Evil, however created, is not to be presented within the closed circuit of a tragic protagonist's soul. Its influence inevitably broadens to include those associated with the king and, ultimately, his kingdom itself. The Fisher King myth lurks beneath the surface of this action. Having attained knowledge of evil, Leontes sinks into spiritual infirmity. Increasingly, he becomes a ritual personification of Mankind laboring under the curse of sin and evil.

The last two acts seem designed as a unit, an antidote to the tragic action of the first three. They introduce the atmosphere and devices of romantic comedy so as to suggest Shakespeare has created what might be called an "open-ended tragedy." In *The Winter's Tale*, as in the tragedies, the influence of tragedy is not confined to the life of the protagonist, nor does the play end with his physical death. Instead Shakespeare has dramatized a symbolic death and rebirth, through the use of scapegoats, and shifted attention to the spiritual and communal life cycle, rather than the individual tragic redemption, through suffering and death, of a single, noble human being. Leontes' son Mamillius dies in his stead so that the suffering king may go on to the spiritual regeneration effected through the mock death of his wife and the fertility mission of his daughter.

Pericles articulates a similar mode of development and thematic concern. But the scapegoat action is sketched more overtly in the construction of this episodic play. Tainted with the sexual evil of Antiochus' incest, Pericles draws vengeance away from his people by doing works of charity and following the penitential route traversed by the Biblical Paul. Like a figure from Eliot's "The Waste Land," he lives a kind of half-life, figuratively dead, until restored to spiritual health by the healing agency of his daughter Marina and her purgative music.¹² In this play, as well, is to be found the mock death used so majestically in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. Thaisa, Marina, and Pericles himself undergo forms of mock death. Marina's eventual release from the brothel is regenerating, as is her effect on the grieving king, who awakens like Lear to her celestial music. Thaisa is to Pericles what Hermione

is to Leontes, and it is the men not the women who are spiritually reborn, for the women function as scapegoats within the tragicomic implications of the formula.

Pericles' suit for the hand of Antiochus' daughter brings him abruptly into knowledge of sin and death. Because of his willingness to risk death to win an empty prize, atonement is exacted of him. His actions after this experience of evil recall the comic principle of misrule, which assumes that going beyond the limits of normality into moral chaos and disorder eventually produces a new and more precious "order". Out of knowledge of sin and death, come spiritual reawakening and renewed social order.

As with *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* begins with a tragic action and moves toward a comic one, through a dramatic confrontation between life and death, youth and age, summer and winter, and grace and sin. Its plot division in fact echoes that of *The Winter's Tale*, a three part-two part structure, which remains essentially episodic. In not only the dramatic formula of the action but also the life history of the major figures, the main theme of the late plays is evident: out of death comes life, out of suffering comes happiness, and out of evil comes good.

In *Cymbeline*, elements from *King Lear* take on fresh expression. In the beginning of the play, Cymbeline's wrath and tyranny remind us of Leontes and his irrational treatment of wife and child. Symbolically, in the first section of the play, Winter blights Spring unnaturally, banishing Spring from the community, until it can finally be returned, in the second movement, through the "medicinal" agency of the young.

Unlike *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles*, *Cymbeline* does not focus upon the life of the suffering king. Significantly, it shifts emphasis to his children, especially to Imogen's scapegoat function and the symbolism of the two "lopp'd branches." Already in his sterile period when the play opens, Cymbeline receives his regeneration through the journey of his daughter, a clear parallel to the relationships of Perdita and Leontes, Marina and Pericles, and to some extent Miranda and Prospero.¹³ Cymbeline's function is in fact close to Prospero's. As he is the symbolic center of the tensions of the kingdom, the final reconciliations are focused in him: "Oh, what am I / A mother to the birth of three?"¹⁴

Clearly, the "incest theme" in *Pericles* and the "adultery theme" in *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline* carry similar weight. Cymbeline's unhealthy relationship with his spiritually barren wife is reminiscent of Antiochus' incestuous relationship with his daughter and Leontes' paranoiac sexual jealousy. Sexual evil is only hinted at in *The Tempest*, however, through Caliban's attempted rape of Miranda and Ferdinand's labors. Though fabricated by Iachimo, the adultery in *Cymbeline* stains Posthumus with a taint which, as in *Pericles*, must be removed by penance. The concern in

Cymbeline, therefore, is not the cause of the present action. Rather, it is the reconciliation with his family and the restoration of the community to health through the scapegoat journey and mock death of his child. Ritual mock death is closely associated in these plays with time and the conception of spiritual recovery. In *The Winter's Tale*, the mock death of Thaisa is required so that Leontes may grow in spiritual understanding and the prophesy of the Oracle be fulfilled. In *Cymbeline*, Imogen's supposed death has comparable effect, as is the case with the long lost brothers. In *Pericles*, the formula is clear in the mock death of daughter and wife, as well as the "death-in-life" experience of the protagonist. In *The Tempest*, finally, the experience of the entire play, including Prospero's island sojourn and the transforming "death by water", suggests the mock death before rebirth of ritual drama. The resurrection motif inherent in the traditional mock death is equally clear in *Cymbeline*, where Cornelius comments, "but there is / No danger in what show of death it makes, / More than the locking up the spirits a time, / To be more fresh, reviving."¹⁵ And Lucius exclaims, "Some falls are means the happier to rise."¹⁶

The themes of individual regeneration and children as "sacred physic" to the nation insure that the spiritual continuity of life is central to the late plays. Not only the audience but the characters themselves are struck by similarities between parents and children. In *The Winter's Tale*, for example, Leontes remarks wonderingly on the likeness of son to father, daughter to mother. The result is that the main characters also function as personifications of the stages of life. As the young reenact the history and experiences of the old, the late romances imitate ritual drama, and the final impression of each is of the human life story. In a sense, Perdita and Florizel reenact the marriages of their parents. Leontes exclaims to Florizel, "Your father's image is so hit in you, / His very air, that I should call you brother..."¹⁷ In *Pericles*, Marina, who "beget'st him that did thee beget,"¹⁸ not only brings about the spiritual transformation of her father, she is the image of her mother.

It is worth restating that the late plays are not unorthodox experiments at the end of Shakespeare's career. Rather they are sophisticated extensions of the methods and themes of the festive comedies, with the emphasis shifted from the young and their spring-like love to the medicinal influence they exert on the older generation. The plot focus of these plays is not the joyous rebellion of young lovers and their flight to the woods. Rather it is the ritual character of the kingly protagonist who represents the spiritual state of a "sickly weal."

The protagonists of the late plays function, therefore, like those of the Waste Land myth. They undergo spiritual separation from their loved ones, normal happiness and activity, and their communities. The transition, therefore, is from social orientation in the middle comedies to spiritual

accommodation in the late tragicomedies. In the archetypal struggle between the forces of winter and spring in human experience, the kingly protagonist, too, performs a scapegoat function, like that of the dying god archetype. His spring-like rebirth of the spirit accompanies the agency of young lovers and his own children, so that he may exclaim joyfully with Leontes, "Welcome hither as is the spring to the earth." And his personal spiritual *Renouveau* returns health and vitality to a barren land.

The evolution from comedy to tragicomedy is a structural accommodation demanded by the nature of the developing theme. An "opened" tragedy, including death but not that of the protagonist, is the logical culmination of a shift from the group emancipation of the comedies to the scapegoat implications of the fate of the protagonist in the tragedies. Essentially, the dramatic formula of sin-penance-regeneration renders the symbolism and situations of the middle comedies more compatible with themes of reconciliation and rebirth in the late plays. In some ways, then, the late plays lie midway between the festive romantic comedies and the tragedies. Structurally similar to the problem comedies, they lack their encompassing tone, which A.P. Rossiter defines as tragicomic in nature.¹⁹ The dramatic formula opens up the pattern of a typical Shakespearean tragedy to include aspects of the formal conclusion of a comedy: the ceremony of a feast or marriage. In this respect, these plays diminish the character focus of the tragedies in favor of the group emphasis of the comedies. Accordingly, the late plays deal with lifetimes and generations, treating their participants as both individuals and pageant personifications of the human pilgrimage.

The relationship between seasons in nature and seasons in the life of man remains in the forefront of the plays. And youth is presented as a power: a renewer of life and antagonist to death. As in the middle comedies, the young are associated in symbolism and imagery with nature so as to fulfill a thematic function in the system orchestrating the fall and restoration of both king and realm. Again reminiscent of the comedies, extremes of excess and defect destroy the natural harmony of life so as to create an unhealthy imbalance. The result is a kind of spiritual chaos, expressed sexually in terms of the family and the community and leading to a view of the protagonist as figuratively dead. His ritual isolation, asceticism and mock death are "cured" by the sacred fertility of his daughter. And king and country are purged of time, error, and sin, as the generations merge in significance.

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Notes

¹See G. Wilson Knight's discussion of *The Winter's Tale* in *The Crown of Life* (London, 1965), pp. 76-128.

²*Shakespeare's History Plays* (Harmondsworth, England, 1969).

³See also W.B. Thorne, "Cymbeline: Lopp'd Branches and the Concept of Regeneration" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XX (1969), 143-59.

⁴Janet Spens, *An Essay on Shakespeare's Relation to Tradition* (Oxford, 1916), p. 101.

⁵E.M.W. Tillyard, *Shakespeare's Last Plays* (London, 1951), p. 26.

⁶Richard Wincor, "Shakespeare's Festival Plays" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, I (1950), 219.

⁷Knight, *Crown*, p. 37.

⁸D.A. Traversi, *Shakespeare: The Last Phase* (Stanford, 1953), p. 138. See also his *An Approach to Shakespeare* (New York, 1956), pp. 215-16.

⁹See also W.B. Thorne, "Pericles and the 'Incest-Fertility' Opposition" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XXII (Winter, 1971), 43-56.

¹⁰See Northrop Frye, "The Argument of Comedy" in Leonard F. Dean, *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism* (New York, 1967), pp. 79-89.

¹¹For analysis of this structural system in the comedies, see C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton, 1959), and Marion B. Smith, *Dualities in Shakespeare* (Toronto, 1966).

¹²That "child-changed fathers" become increasingly significant in Shakespearean dramaturgy is evidenced in plays as different as *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear*.

¹³Prospero says to Miranda, "O, a cherubin / Thou wast that did deserve me" (I. ii. 54-55).

¹⁴(V. v. 368-69).

¹⁵(I. v. 39-42).

¹⁶(IV. ii. 403).

¹⁷(V. i. 127-28).

¹⁸(V. i. 197).

¹⁹See *Angel with Horns* (London, 1970), pp. 108-28.

Macbeth and His "dearest partner of greatness," Lady Macbeth by Robert J. Lordi

Chief among the problems that have troubled critics of *Macbeth* is the one concerning Macbeth's character, either its inconsistency and hence its lack of psychological realism, or its failure to conform to Aristotle's conception of the tragic hero.¹ How, it is asked, can "noble Macbeth" who is "too full o' th' milk of human kindness" commit so horrible a deed as the murder of his king? Or how can such a criminal generate the sympathy necessary for a hero to be tragic? The answers critics give to these questions, according to William Rosen, generally depend on their approach.² If they concentrate on character study, as does A.C. Bradley, they invariably sentimentalize or glorify Macbeth. If they concentrate instead on pattern analysis, such as L.C. Knights and Caroline Spurgeon, they "find Macbeth either ignoble or, at best, unsympathetic."³ Both approaches, while helpful in elucidating what our response to Macbeth should be at various stages of the play, have neglected what I consider a central aspect of the problem of Macbeth's character, that is, his changing but continuing relationship with Lady Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth has not been disregarded in critical literature, but neither does she get her due. She is far more important in the design of the play and in determining our response to Macbeth than has generally been acknowledged. She is often conceded to be the driving force behind Macbeth, so much so that some critics have felt the need to defend Macbeth from the charge of total passivity in the murder of Duncan, which would effectively disqualify him as an agent in his own tragic fall.⁴ But, after the murder, she is usually given short shrift by the critics, who generally analyze in detail her behavior only in the sleep-walking scene, with perhaps occasional observations on her growing estrangement from her husband, or her strength in the ghost scene. Bradley understandably gave her more attention than any later critic because he believed her to be a central character of nearly equal importance to Macbeth himself, and "in the opening act at least. . .the most commanding and perhaps the most awe-inspiring figure that Shakespeare drew."⁵ Bradley also noticed a problem in the characterization of Lady Macbeth similar to that of Macbeth -- its lack of consistency:

...if the Lady Macbeth of [the early scenes of the play] were really utterly inhuman, or a 'fiend-like queen,' as Malcolm calls her, the Lady Macbeth of the sleep-walking scene would be an impossibility. The one woman could never become the other.⁶

This seeming lack of consistency in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is just one indication that they should be understood as complementary characters. This is not to deny the individuality of each, but to suggest instead that for dramaturgical reasons -- of economy, clarity, and emphasis -- Shakespeare divided our response to a single individual by presenting his contrary characteristics in two distinct, but complementary, characters.⁷ Lady Macbeth is, in this view, Macbeth's alter ego, a part of him that he prefers not to recognize during the murder of Duncan and that he succumbs to almost entirely in the end. As a dramatic instrument, a foil -- similar in purpose, though not cast in allegorical or symbolic form -- Lady Macbeth provides a constant counterpoise to Macbeth's successive psychological states so that even when in the depths of villainy, he never completely loses the sympathy proper to a tragic hero. In the murder of Duncan, Lady Macbeth is more than a partner in the crime, more than the dominant force; she is the pragmatic, unscrupulous side of Macbeth's nature that compels him to perform his tragic deed. Thus the early Macbeth is not a man "full o' th' milk of human kindness" (Lady Macbeth's view); nor is he the "dead butcher" (Malcolm's view) if we read Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene as an expression, not merely of *her* suppressed conscience, but also of Macbeth's -- at a time when his conscience is overtly dead.

General support for the view presented here of Lady Macbeth as a dramatic representation of one side of Macbeth is found in several major commentators. Bradley, for example, emphasizes their likeness: "These two characters are fired by one and the same passion of ambition; and to a considerable extent they are alike."⁸ John Russell Brown similarly perceives the presentation of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as "an exploration of a deep, 'long-engrafted' and instinctive relationship" and, on the basis of their echoing each other's images, asserts "their mutual sympathy of mind."⁹ Both Harold C. Goddard and James Kirsch extend Bradley's perception of the psychological conflict between Macbeth's "conscience and reflective mind" and his "deepest self." Goddard points out a number of "Janus-like passages in *Macbeth*, where the surface meaning is contradicted from below."¹⁰ Kirsch pushes the psychological approach to its ultimate limits of Jungian archetypes in his view that "in the characterization of Lady Macbeth we do not have a separate individual, a living woman, but the personification of Macbeth's ambition and darkest possibilities. . . . The two personalities of which Macbeth is composed, are Lady Macbeth and himself -- in narrower psychological terms, Macbeth's ego and his anima."¹¹ The symbolic potential of the Macbeth-Lady Macbeth relationship has not been neglected. Lady Macbeth, as symbol, is perhaps an extension of the commonplace interpretation of the witches as symbolic. Robert Speaight, for example, maintains that "the witches are the theatrical expression of Macbeth's

conscience; they happen, as it were, inside him";¹² and Lady Macbeth has been considered by Matthew Proser as the fourth "witch,"¹³ A.P. Rossiter treats all the characters of *Macbeth* as part of a design, as images, or symbols, and "the two 'protagonists,'" he asserts, "symbolize complementary aspects" of a self-assertive force promoting disorder.¹⁴ Irving Ribner also treats all of the play's characters as symbols: "Just as Banquo stands for that side of Macbeth which would uphold the natural order and reject evil, Lady Macbeth represents the contrary side."¹⁵ The theatrical and hence unreal aspect of the characterization in *Macbeth* -- emphasized, as we have seen, by Speaight and Rossiter, is found also in Kenneth Muir: "Shakespeare was not so much concerned with the creation of real human beings, but with theatrical, or *poetical*, effect."¹⁶

This review of commentary on the Macbeth-Lady Macbeth relationship is meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive. Each critic, approaching the play from a different angle, sees a relationship that somewhat corroborates my own view -- that Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's alter ego, the dramatic embodiment of a part of himself that Shakespeare could project clearly in no other way. A view that approximates my own is Maynard Mack's description of "the opposing voice, which belongs to the hero's foil."¹⁷ In Mack's view, "the most interesting uses of the opposing voice occur in *Macbeth* and *Othello*. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare gives it to Lady Macbeth, and there was never. . . a more thrilling tragic counterpoint set down for the stage than that in the scene following the murder of Duncan, when her purely physical reading of what has happened to them both is met by his metaphysical intuitions."¹⁸ The great virtue of Mack is that although he analyzes characters as part of structural pattern, he does so without sacrificing their reality or individuality, as do most of the critics reviewed previously.

If our response to the deeds of an heroic figure -- such as a Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, or Richard III--does not always win our approval and with it our sympathy, it does more often than not excite our admiration. At the beginning of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare presents his protagonist as a noble warrior, as a courageous and fearless savior of king and country, in short, as a hero. The epic-like speech of the bleeding Captain is designed to introduce the heroic qualities of Macbeth such as his disdain of Fortune and lack of fear of any consequence to himself, his resolute and inflexible course in pursuing his enemy, and his uncompromising action upon openly confronting him. But Shakespeare does not permit Macbeth to remain a hero for long. The next time we see him, from the moment the witches make their initial prophecies, he is non-heroic, and he remains largely unheroic at least until his fatal decision to visit the witches. His immediate reaction to the witches' prophecies is one of rapt horror as he stares inwardly at a vision of himself as a potential murderer that he either has been unaware of or has suppressed.

We soon learn that he is "afear'd To be the same in [his] own act and valor" as he is in desire (I. vii. 39-41)¹⁹; he is conscience-stricken, vacillating and infirm of purpose, reluctant in action, cowardly and hypocritical in his murder of a defenseless man under the cover of darkness, in his calculated murder, and rationalization thereof, of the grooms, and in his general willingness to assume a "false face" to "hide what the false heart doth know" (I. vii. 82).

All of this, of course, reduces our heroic image of Macbeth and hence our admiration of him. But necessarily concomitant with this reduction is a humanizing process that invites sympathy. Macbeth's asides and soliloquies--generally occasioned by the witches or Lady Macbeth -- reflect his human side -- his "milk of human kindness," his fears, his conscience, his prudence, his ambition. And these interior private views of the protagonist torn between his individualistic, heroic drive beyond societal norms and his human survival instinct to remain within those norms involve us with him in a bond of sympathy based on identification.

While the humanness of Macbeth is being emphasized in Act I, Lady Macbeth, his "dearest partner of greatness," assumes the hero's mantle to become, in the words of Bradley, "the most commanding and perhaps the most awe-inspiring figure that Shakespeare drew."²⁰ It is her heroic qualities -- her determination and resoluteness, her inflexible will, her singular passionate purpose, and extreme lack of conscience, of compromise, and imagination -- that critics constantly observe in her that drive Macbeth to commit a crime too horrible for him, not to imagine, but to put into words. She "exerts the ultimate deciding influence on the action,"²¹ or to put it another way, Macbeth "is old Iron Pants in the field. . . , but at home she has to wear the pants."²² The reversal of roles noticed in the latter quotation is significant for its emphasis on the manly, heroic role Lady Macbeth assumes in the murder of Duncan. Other indications of it are in her prayer to be unsexed, in her taunting her husband on his lack of manhood (which is crucial in his yielding to her), and in his recognition of her "undaunted mettle" that "should compose Nothing but males" (I. vii. 72-74).

The language that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth speak is the key to how we are expected to respond to each. In Act I, Lady Macbeth's language is heroic--extreme, absolute, hyperbolic, uncompromising--as opposed to Macbeth's more humane, conditional language. Her invocation to the evil spirits, each sentence of which is imperative, is an unreserved commitment of her entire self to demonic possession -- she willingly gives her all. Her diction throughout is absolute. She implores the spirits to unsex her, to empty her completely of her female nature, and to fill her "from the crown to the toe *top-full* / Of *direst* cruelty" (I. v. 38-41).²³ She wants "no compunctious visitings of nature" to shake her "fell purpose" and asks "thick night" to shroud itself "in the *dunnest* smoke of hell" to hide the murder. Equally heroic are the sheer power of the language, the extremity, and

uncompromising purpose of the speech in which she reminds Macbeth of a vow apparently made to her earlier (I. vii. 54-59). What she says she would without question do here (dash the brains out of a babe smiling in her face) may appal us, may evoke images of her as the "fiend-like queen," but at the same time, we wonder at the magnitude of her heroically evil determination to serve her will and Macbeth's.

Macbeth's language, though of high poetic quality, is essentially non-heroic in the early stages of the play. Its mood is often conditional, its tone cautionary or prudential, its content that of fear or compromise -- qualities readily associated with common humanity's survival instincts. Far from being absolute like his wife, he speaks conditionally: "If chance will have me King, why chance may crown me Without my stir" (I. iii. 143-44). In response to her resolute desire to dispatch "this night's great business, he temporizes: "We will speak further" (I. v. 69). His famous interior monologue (I. vii. 1-28) is non-heroic from its initial "If" to its ambivalent end: "I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition. . . ." The first twelve lines comprise three sentences in the form of a conditional syllogism, the conclusion of which is a prudential reason for not murdering Duncan. The syllogism and the remainder of the monologue offer a string of rationalizations for not taking action. These rationalizations differ from the stoical and ethical reasons that Hamlet and other Jacobean heroes offer for inaction in that they are the products of, at best, Macbeth's social scruples, at worst, of his fear of consequences.

Significantly, Lady Macbeth in her role as a complementary aspect of Macbeth's mind, enters immediately upon the conclusion of this monologue, the result of which deliberation is his first resolute categorical statement in the play: "We will proceed no further in this business." But his firmness of purpose bends easily before the determined assault of the real hero of the first Act of the play. Lady Macbeth taunts him with his lack of manhood and the infirmity of his vow, and Macbeth, psychologically no match for his powerful wife, collapses with his all-too-human conditional question: "If we should fail?"

Such a lack of a resolute will and a firm commitment in Macbeth is implicit in almost every important word and deed of his in the early part of the play. His first aside in response to the witches' "supernatural soliciting" (I. iii. 130-42) and his aside upon hearing Duncan name his son Prince of Cumberland (I. iv. 50-53) reveal the disunity of his mind and body, as do his rapt state and his trances during the dagger scene and immediately after the murder ("What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes": II. ii. 58). Also noteworthy in regard to his lack of commitment is his despairing wish that the knocking at the gate could awaken Duncan. All of these instances bear witness to Macbeth's paradoxical human nature, and, except for his wish

to awaken Duncan, reveal his desire to suppress a darker side of himself that he fears to admit to conscious light.

The physical embodiment of his darker self is Lady Macbeth, his "dearest partner of greatness," who does not even attempt to meet his scruples and reluctance with superior arguments,²⁴ but drives him instead inexorably toward a goal he has secretly craved. "To her there is no separation between will and deed; and. . . she is sure it [the murder] will be done."²⁵ Her virtue, amorality, resolute determination to achieve her aspirations at all costs, and her efficacious guile remind us of the Machiavellian villain hero,²⁶ or of Richard III, although she lacks his ironic sense of himself. Like Richard, she is a monster of evil whom we may marvel at, but not approve. That is her function in the dramatic economy of the play. She is the Machiavellian aspect of Macbeth, or the evil part of him that can drive him to his tragic ruin; but by embodying this evil aspect of Macbeth in a separate person, Shakespeare could clearly focus on each side of the dual nature of his paradoxical protagonist without sacrificing sympathy for him. If Macbeth were as heroic in his drive toward evil as are Lady Macbeth and Richard III, he would scarcely arouse the sympathy proper to the traditional tragic hero. It would be extremely difficult, perhaps impossible, for a dramatist -- even for one as great as Shakespeare -- to present sympathetically a man who is cravenly contemplating a horrible crime. But it is possible to present sympathetically a man who imagines himself committing a crime to gain an apparent good, but against which his mind and body rebel. The problem arises in the attempt to present in limited time and space a divided character who is alternately repulsed by a crime, and then eagerly committed to it, without blurring the focus, confusing our sympathies, or arousing questions of consistency or sincerity. In *Macbeth*, this problem is resolved by embodying the dividedness of Macbeth in two intimately allied, but opposite characters.

After his murder of Duncan, profound psychic changes occur in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The play has often been interpreted in terms of a theme of crime and punishment, with the first part concerned with the nature of the criminal and his crime and the second part with the effects of the crime on the criminal.²⁷ In broad outline, this is what the play is about: the second half of the play shows Macbeth suffering for his crime by the hardening of his heart to evil, and Lady Macbeth suffers horrible torments of conscience. This thematic statement points up the complex paradoxical structure of the play, one in which both become the direct opposites of their earlier selves while remaining in opposition to each other. Whereas in the beginning Macbeth was the conscience-stricken, fearful one, now it is Lady Macbeth, and whereas she was devoid of human feeling, now it is Macbeth who is. Along with these psychic changes goes a change in their relative heroic stature: he becomes more absolute in evil as she becomes more humane. The point at which these

changes occur is ambiguous, but Macbeth's initial ascendancy over his wife is evident when he plots and executes the murder of Banquo without her aid or knowledge. Despite the cowardice when confronted by Banquo's ghost, Macbeth is presented more heroically in the central scenes of the play. On the other hand, despite her show of strength when her husband cowers before Banquo's ghost, Lady Macbeth begins to recede as her active role diminishes. In the murder of Banquo, Macbeth acts independently of his wife, without scruple, with resoluteness, in defiance of fate (III. i. 64-72); and he speaks a language that is always positive (III. i. 49-72) and oftentimes absolute, as in his decision to visit the weird sisters:

I will to-morrow
(And betimes I will) to the weird sisters.
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know
By the worst means the worst. For mine own good
All causes shall give way (III. iv. 132-136).

The desperate promise of this vow is fulfilled in his still more heroic conjuration of the witches (IV. i. 50-61). This conjuration, recalling Lady Macbeth's invocation of evil spirits, is another reminder that Macbeth's darker side, represented earlier by Lady Macbeth, is now ascendant. The language of Macbeth's conjuration is bold, extreme, peremptory. Though his demand to the witches is voiced in a series of concessive clauses, what he concedes is the principle of civilization itself to satisfy his inordinate desire to learn his fate. In so doing, he epitomizes the antithetical king, or tyrant, which of course is the way he is portrayed throughout the rest of the play. The tyranny of his desires, which are now absolute and precisely opposite of what they were earlier when there was division between his desires and acts, is immediately confirmed by his decision to kill Macduff and his family. This decision and the conjuration clearly indicate that Macbeth has become the precise opposite of what he was earlier. Before the murder of Duncan, he was humane, reluctant to act, divided in desire and act. Now he is heroic in speech and action: he is extreme, fully committed to action, and he leaves no room for scruple, conscience, or consequence to come between desire and act:

From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done
(IV. i. 146-49).

Though Macbeth loses sympathy as a result of his resolute evil, he attracts some of the awe or fascination we reserved earlier for Lady Macbeth.

Our response to Macbeth in the final Act of the play is more complex than that in Act IV because Shakespeare presents him first paradoxically and

then ambivalently, more so than in the scenes before and after the murder of Banquo in Act III. The paradox is involved in the complete reversal of the respective psychic and moral positions of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as is evident in her sleep-walking scene and in his dialogue with the Doctor. The completeness of the psychic change in Lady Macbeth is underscored by her ritual attempts to wash the "damned spot" from her hand: after the murder of Duncan, she matter-of-factly believed "a little water clears us of this deed" (II. ii. 66). Earlier she perceived the crime as something physical, something external, to be washed away:

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red (II. ii. 59-62).

Macbeth's trance-like utterance here is almost identical in the tenor of its image and in its hyperbole to that of Lady Macbeth's somnolent utterance:

Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of
Arabia will not sweeten this little hand (V. i. 47-48).

The parallelism here is no coincidence, but another instance of the sympathetic bond by which Shakespeare continually associates the subconscious minds of his two central characters.²⁸ Similar in effect are her penultimate words in the play ("What's done cannot be undone"), which parallel Macbeth's earlier convictions while ironically inverting her own.

Lady Macbeth's enigmatic line, "The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?," may also be interpreted as another indication of a continuing bond between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth. This line may be explained as showing that Lady Macbeth still shares her husband's confidence and secrets or that she has learned of his tyrannous ravages from popular murmuring. The first alternative seems unlikely if the theme is one of crime and punishment, for one of Macbeth's punishments is his growing alienation from society, from his subjects, and especially from those formerly devoted to him (V. iii. 19-28). The second alternative is plausible, but it may simply be Shakespeare's way of establishing another tie between Macbeth and his wife that makes them partners in crime and conscience. At any rate, however, she has become aware of her husband's more recent murders, the sleep-walking scene is designed to show that she too feels the weight of "his secret murders sticking on [her] hands" (V. ii. 17). No longer heroic, as her fragmented prose language suggests, so frightened by shadows as to constantly need a lamp by her bed, unable to sleep, grief-stricken in conscience -- that is the final image we get of Lady Macbeth, a softer image of a tortured human soul who finally wins a measure of the sympathy she forfeited in her earlier villain's role.

The villain's role, as we have seen, has shifted to Macbeth. His loss of spiritual awareness is especially evident in an episode generally neglected by the critics, his dialogue with the Doctor (V. iii. 37-56). Here, significantly, Macbeth is shown to consider crime now, as Lady Macbeth did earlier, as something physical and external, something to be "razed out" by "some sweet oblivious antidote" -- an image which ironically echoes the similar "all great Neptune's ocean" that was used earlier to reveal his keen awareness of the metaphysical effects of evil. Then, despite the Doctor's orthodox denial of any possibility of a magical cure for the disease oppressing his wife, and despite Macbeth's angry rejection of all medicine ("Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it!"), Macbeth nevertheless calls immediately upon the Doctor to diagnose the disease of his land in order to prescribe a "purgative drug" to "scour these English hence." This dialogue serves to show the antithetical Macbeth in the depths of moral blindness in that he can no longer distinguish between physical and spiritual evil, nor is he aware that he, and not the holy forces approaching, is Scotland's evil that requires purgation.

The final image that Shakespeare presents of Macbeth continues the ambivalence present in the earlier Macbeth, only now it is more pronounced as Macbeth is alternately presented as heroic or human as we view him publicly or privately. The words and deeds of Macbeth as soldier are generally heroic: he refuses to play "the Roman fool and die" on his own sword, (V. viii. 1-3), and when confronted by Macduff he "will not yield (V. viii. 27)." His last words, "Lay on, Macduff, And damned be him that first cries 'Hold, enough!'" (V. viii. 33-34) recall something of his former self who fought for king and country. However, although his words and deeds have an heroic accent, they are conditioned by his desperate attempts to avoid Macduff and by his tragic loss of hope and freedom: "They have tied me to a stake. I cannot fly, But bear-like I must fight the course" (V. vii. 1-2). Moreover, the situation is paradoxically reversed from the beginning of the play: there Macbeth was the primary hero and a virtuous one at that, and now he is the precise opposite, with Macduff succeeding to his earlier role of champion of the true king.

The qualified admiration we feel for Macbeth in his public heroic role as soldier is complicated by the private glimpses we are given of him in his final two monologues -- "My way of life Is fall'n into the sear," etc. (V. iii. 22-28) and his "Tomorrow" - speech (V. v. 17-28). For several reasons, these monologues are especially effective in arousing sympathy for Macbeth. To be sure, all of his monologues -- particularly his asides and soliloquies in Act I -- serve to humanize Macbeth by involving us directly with his inner emotions, but these final monologues are even more effective in this regard because they are more meditative, and less deliberative, than the earlier ones. Moreover, their contexts heighten their emotional impact. Not only do they alternate with the heroic image of Macbeth that is in the forefront during the last Act,

but their quiet meditative tone contrasts sharply with the frenetic battle preparations surrounding them. Finally, their content is at odds with the image of Macbeth as an heroic villain presented steadily at least from the time of his visit to the witches. His meditation on his heartsickness of soul, on his loneliness and alienation from human community, is emotionally affecting: it is a lament revealing his awareness of his spiritual isolation that belies the spiritual blindness evident in his dialogue with the Doctor.

Macbeth's tragic awareness culminates in his "Tomorrow-" speech, which is immediately preceded by a soliloquy occasioned by the cries of Lady Macbeth's women within the castle (V. v. 9-15). In the soliloquy, he lugubriously intones his full awareness of his deadened sensibilities that have "almost forgot the taste of fears," and of his full commitment to evil ("supped full with horrors") so that "Direness, familiar to [his] slaughterous thoughts, Cannot once start [him]." Macbeth here recognizes what everyone else has already recognized in him, Angus in his choric epitome of him as "a dwarfish thief," and Lady Macbeth in her tortured rhyme "The Thane of Fife had a wife." This soliloquy, though interrupted by two lines of dialogue in which Seyton announces the queen's death, should be considered, it seems to me, as the preliminary part of the "Tomorrow-" speech. In it, Macbeth particularizes his current spiritual state which will form the basis for the general nihilistic view of life espoused in the second part. The tone in both parts is meditative, the feeling one of apathy, the thought structurally related by cause and effect. The second half of the meditation, which provides our final view of Macbeth's spiritual state, is dramatically related to Seyton's announcement of Lady Macbeth's death. It begins with Macbeth's enigmatic statement: "She should have died hereafter. There would have been a time for such a word." These words have generally been taken literally as a statement about the death of Lady Macbeth,²⁹ but given the continuing relationship we have seen between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, they may be as applicable to himself as to his wife. "Hereafter" is ambiguous and is best understood, it seems to me, in the context of the rest of the meditation, which is about time--future, past, and present time in that order. Though Macbeth speaks of the future ("To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow"), he is clearly aware that for him there will be no tomorrow, not because he expects to be slain in the forthcoming battle, but because everyday is monotonously the same. The past is equally fruitless ("All our yesterdays have lighted fools / The way to dusty death") so that life for Macbeth is reduced to the present moment, which, because cut off from past and future, is without purpose or meaning. Thus, he presents his nihilistic vision of life in a series of momentary images of impermanence--a "brief candle," "a walking shadow," "a poor player/That struts and frets his hour upon the stage," "a tale Told by an idiot"--based on his inner experience. What he has experienced is spiritual death. Just prior to

the announcement of Lady Macbeth's death, he has recognized his incapacity even to start at horrors that once literally stood his hair on end. The death of his wife, which symbolically represents his own death, moves him not at all. He is emotionless, hopeless, changeless, in short, spiritually dead. In fact, it would perhaps not be too much to say that it is his awareness of his inability to change, to affect the course of his life, to have a tomorrow different from today, that constitutes his highest tragic extremity. Macbeth's final meditation on what he was and what he has become—his sense of the irreversibility of his spiritually deadened state -- makes him, and us, profoundly sad.

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Notes

¹A.P. Rossiter is representative of the first critical view. He finds it "incomprehensible" that Macbeth should be aware that his act is fully evil and that no good can come of it, and yet commit it "simply because he cannot endure to be called a coward." As a result, Rossiter treats Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, and Banquo as "parts of a pattern, a design" as "images, or symbols." *Angel With Horns* (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1961), pp. 216-217. Sir Arthur Quiller Couch is representative of the second view: "How could it lie within the compass even of Shakespeare. . . to make a tragic hero of this Macbeth — traitor to his king, murderer of his sleeping guest, breaker of most sacred trust, ingrate, self-seeker, false kinsman, perjured soldier? . . . How could Shakespeare make his audience feel pity or terror for such a man?" *Notes on Shakespeare's Workmanship* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1917), pp. 22-23. For views approximating either that of Rossiter or Quiller Couch, see: Wayne Booth, "Shakespeare's Tragic Villain," in *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1963), ed. Laurence Lerner, pp. 180-181; Robert B. Heilman, "The Criminal as Tragic Hero: Dramatic Methods" in *Shakespeare Survey* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1966), ed. Kenneth Muir, pp. 12-24; Kenneth Muir, ed. *Macbeth*, 9th ed. (1962; rpt. New York: Random House, Inc., 1964), p. liii; E.E. Stoll, "Source and Motive in *Macbeth* and *Othello*," in *Shakespeare: Modern Essays in Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), ed. Leonard Dean, p. 318; Irving Ribner, *Patterns in Shakesperian Tragedy* (London: Methuen and Co., 1960), pp. 157, 160; and J. Dover Wilson, ed. *Macbeth* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1968), p. lii. On the basis of Macbeth's character, G.B. Harrison in *Shakespeare's Tragedies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 190, 193, 202, and Mark Van Doren in *Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (1939; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., n.d.), pp. 216-217, see *Macbeth* as less than a full tragedy.

²William Rosen, *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 55.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

⁴"If [Lady Macbeth's] persuasions are convincing to him. . . then Macbeth has no nobility of mind, and no independent strength of will. Such a man cannot be admirable, nor his fate of tragic importance": Rossiter, pp. 216-217. See also Booth, p. 183; and John R. Brown, *Shakespeare: The Tragedy of Macbeth* (Great Neck, N.Y.: Barron's Educational Series, 1963), p. 28.

⁵A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (1904; rpt. New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 291.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁷The importance of accepting the artist's need for the principle of complementarity in presenting his complex aesthetic vision is established by Norman Rabkin in Chapter One of *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: The Free Press, 1967).

⁸p. 278.

⁹Pp. 41, 46.

¹⁰*The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (1951; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), II, 119.

¹¹*Shakespeare's Royal Self* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), p. 347.

¹²*Nature in Shakesperian Tragedy* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 54.

¹³*The Heroic Image in Five Shakespearean Tragedies* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 57.

¹⁴Pp. 217, 218.

¹⁵p. 160.

¹⁶p. liii.

¹⁷"The Jacobean Shakespeare," in *Jacobean Theatre* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), ed. J.R. Brown and B. Harris, p. 15.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 18. The opposing voice of Othello is, of course, Iago. Wolfgang Clemen has observed how Othello's "inner alteration" is signaled by his adoption of images which earlier were characteristic of Iago: *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1951), pp. 131-132.

¹⁹This and all subsequent line references are to Alfred Harbage's *Macbeth* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1956).

²⁰P. 291.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Mary McCarthy, "General Macbeth" in *Macbeth* (New York: New American Library, 1963), ed. Sylvan Barnet, p. 232.

²³The italics here and in the next sentence are added to emphasize the absolute diction.

²⁴The weakness of Lady Macbeth's persuasions is discussed by Rossiter, p. 216.

²⁵Bradley, p. 292.

²⁶The Machiavellian aspect of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is discussed by Paul N. Siegel, *Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), pp. 147-150. Interestingly, J.W. Allen compares Machiavelli's moral insensibility with Lady Macbeth's: "He would have his Prince commit murder and feel like Lady Macbeth: 'A little water clears us of this deed.'" *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 2nd ed. (1928; rpt. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), p. 478.

²⁷See, for example, Goddard, pp. 108, 111, 115-116; Robert Ornstein, *The Moral Vision of Jacobean Tragedy* (Madison, Wis.: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 231; and Wilson, p. lx.

²⁸Robert Heilman suggests that "it may be 'in character for different characters to use the same images,' which can be a device for suggesting similarities or even contrasts among them; or if the images belong dominantly to one character in one part of the play, and to another in another part, the change may be an important mark of dramatic progression. . . . 'Wit and Witchcraft: An Approach to *Othello*' in Dean, p. 333. Mack is more definite: "Lady Macbeth's sleep-walking scene is, I think, Shakespeare's device for keeping [Macbeth] before us in his capacity as tragic hero and sufferer. . . . in some way the pity of this situation suffuses him as well as her, the more so because in every word she utters his presence beside her is supposed" (p. 25).

²⁹Wilson, p. 167. Muir translates the statement into two alternative statements, both quite literal, and then makes a case for the ambiguity of the statement on grounds different from my own, p. 159.

**"Come, 'tis no matter. / Do not you meddle"¹:
TOO MUCH ADO IN
SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY
By Philip Traci**

However critics have viewed *Much Ado About Nothing*, whether as happy comedy² or Shakespeare's most cynical study in the genre³, they have agreed that its title, despite its seeming throwaway quality, carries significance. Here, however, agreement ends. Dorothy Hockey sees a central pun in the Elizabethan pronunciation of "nothing" as "noting", which underscores, she points out, the noting and misnoting in the play.⁴ The pun is not without significance to such studies as those of Berry, Evans, and Lewalski, which focus in different ways on different levels of "knowing."⁵ The differences among Claudio's eyes, even when they negotiate for themselves, the Friar's patient and compassionate observation, and Dogberry's Watch's foolish but saving discoveries are as obvious as significant.

The difference among the three are not only in the way in which they see and come to know, but also in the ways in which they react or let be. The title, I suggest, also implies that too much doing or meddling in the affairs of others--especially lovers--is less helpful to a healthy resolution than doing nothing more than allowing the natural course of events to take place.

Meddling is underscored in the text: While Claudio specifically asks Benedick if he has "noted" Hero, the Prince offers his assistance even before he is asked (I. i. 274-279). Before Don John asks Conrade and Borachio if they will assist him to cross his brother, the Prince (I. iii. 59-60), Conrade has asked him if he can make any use of his discontent (1. 34) and Borachio promptly provides him with the opportunity (11. 51ff.). Both the Friar and Dogberry and his men (whose values of course better reflect those of the play) bring positive results more through observation than meddling action. The Friar's long and highlighted speech (IV. i. 153-168) is in stark contrast to Leonato's hasty "Confirmed, confirmed!" (1. 148). He asks simply that he be heard a little (1. 153). Doesn't the line imply staging in which he passively, patiently watches all that has preceded? He has "only been silent so long" and only now "given way to this course of action" by "noting of the lady." He offers as authority the fact that those gathered--loved ones of the bride and groom I should add--*trust* his reading, observation, experience, age, reverence, calling, and divinity (11. 163-166). That the Friar prefaces each of these appeals to authority with negatives ("trust not," "nor," etc.) underscores, I suggest, that he advocates pause, patience, and restraint, rather than action. The only advice he offers is to "pause awhile" (1. 198) to "let her

awhile be secretly kept in, / And publish it that she is dead indeed" (11. 201-202). The Friar offers no specific course of action other than to let nature take its course so that Claudio's grief at Hero's "death" will naturally "restore" his love.

If the Friar's "counsel" lacks the tone of meddling ado, however, Shakespeare's addition to his source in the characters of Dogberry and his *Watch* underlines even more this course of benign neglect. The recent vogue for Keystone Kops with their attendant frenzy does not erase the passivity advocated in their lines. Dogberry, the chief, if shallow, fool who discovers what the wisdom of others could not, "charge[s]" (III. iii. 22) his *Watch* repeatedly to avoid rather than to confront a villain: "take no note of him, but let him go" (1. 26). If Dogberry's men are "to meddle," it is with "none but the Prince's subjects" (11. 31-32). They are, moreover, to "make no noise in the streets." His men can hardly be seen to espouse a code that advocates greater activity, for they would "rather sleep than talk." They are, however, admonished against complete inactivity, for they are told to "have a care that your bills be not stolen" and to "bid those that are drunk get them to bed."

Dogberry's charge continues to advocate non-intervention. While they may lay hands on a thief, for example, they must remember that "they that touch pitch will be defiled," and even more significantly, with "such kind of men, the less you meddle with them, why, the more is for your honesty" (11. 48-50). "The most peaceable way for you, if you do take a thief, he observes, "is to let him show himself what he is, and steal out of your company" (1. 53ff.). Surely the admirability of such conduct by these "shallow fools" is underscored when the "wise" old Leonato's impatience before the *Watch* that has already captured the villains. "I must leave you," he says, since he is "in great haste." His offering wine to the *Watch* as he exits is one of his most commendable, if perfunctory, gestures in the play.

After his charge about the thieves, Dogberry, who has "been always called a merciful man," and "would not hang a man by [his] will, much more a man who hath any honest in him," suggests even less ado than Verges' charge that "if you hear a child cry in the night, you must call to the nurse and bid her still it!" When asked, "If the nurse be asleep and will not hear us?," he adds simply, "Why then, depart in peace and let the child wake her with crying: for the ewe that will not hear her lamb when it baes will never answer a calf when he bleats." Leonato could well profit from such advice. And the advice, works, after all, for Conrade and Borachio are revealed more through their own confessions than through either arrest or examination.

While Shakespeare's other most notable additions to his source, Beatrice and Benedick, might seem to argue for the positive results of meddling matchmaking, the case, I suggest, is otherwise. Beatrice, after all, reminds us

that Benedick "lent" his heart to her once before, when she gave him use of hers (II. i. 249-250). The cementing of their union by the characteristically meddling Prince, who has offered his services to Claudio and his hand to Beatrice with a superficiality outdone only by his despicable behavior in the church, would not be convincing. He decides to bring Beatrice and Benedick together only in order that "the time shall not go dully by us" "in the interim between Claudio's betrothal and his marriage" (11. 323-324). The tenuousness of the union of the warring lovers as joined by the jovial meddlers is emphasized both when Beatrice tests Benedick's love by ordering him to "Kill Claudio" (high meddling indeed!) and at the play's conclusion.

Such a focus on non-interfering heightens the dramatic sympathy of Benedick. While Dogberry's instinct and the Friar's trust have received ample critical attention, Benedick's virtues have not. It may very well be overreading to see Benedick's non-meddling in his "five wits. . . halting off" (I. i. 57), in his talking but nobody marking him (11. 103-104), his always ending "with a jade's trick" (1. 129), and bearing the disguised Beatrice's disdain when even "an oak but with one green leaf on it would have answered her" (II. i. 216). But the evidence does accumulate. He responds to her verbal sallies not with retaliation but by begging the Prince to send him on some errand "to the world's end" (11. 236-237), and instinctively responds to Beatrice's "Kill Claudio" with "Not for the wide world!" When Beatrice complains, "You kill me to deny it," Benedick's "Tarry, sweet Beatrice" mirrors the patience that provides comic resolutions. Surely killing Claudio could not do that. Even when Benedick does agree to be Beatrice and Hero's champion by challenging his friend Claudio, he merely "discontinues" the Prince's company, leaves Claudio to his gossip-like humor (he certainly isn't in mourning yet for his lost bride), and even wishes Claudio peace until they meet again (V. i. 179ff.). Coming so soon after Léonato's aggressive "challenge to the trail of a man" (1. 66), the contrast is revealing.

But then the whole Beatrice and Benedick matchmaking is framed from beginning to end with indications that the lovers must join themselves. Without too much ado, the play suggests, the natural course of things would have led to their eventual marriage. Hero knows the Signoir Mountanto (I. i. 27) that Beatrice asks after is Benedick since he's all her cousin ever thinks about. Even the meddling Prince and Claudio know of their love or they wouldn't have set about to bring them together. The audience realizes that the labor is not Herculean, but comically inevitable.

Even as the Prince, Claudio, and Leonato prepare their meddling plot to join the witty lovers (with Benedick already in the arbor), the men enter "with Music" (s.d. ff. II. iii. 133). The lyrics of their song are not without significance to my focus:

Sigh, no more ladies, sigh no more!
 Men were deceivers ever,
 One foot in sea, and one on shore;
 To one thing constant never,

the song begins. The refrain of "Then sigh not so, / But let them go" that echoes through the song merely repeats the advice that we have noted throughout the play as a whole:

Then sigh not so,
 But let them go,
 And be you blithe and bonny,
 Converting all your sounds of woe
 Into Hey nonny, nonny.
 Sigh no more ditties, sing no moe,
 Of dumps so dull and heavy!
 The fraud of men was ever so,
 Since summer first was leavy.
 Then sigh not so, &c.

The strongest evidence, however, that the play points to the lovers themselves (or Providence) rather than the unsympathetic meddlers bringing about the union of Beatrice and Benedick is the ending. Even after Benedick has proven that he is willing to challenge Claudio to the death, Beatrice, who has up to now "against her will" been sent not only to urge him to dinner (II. iii. 226-227), but also to love him, once more challenges his love. And he, hers. Significantly, they have "own hands against [their] hearts" (V. iv. 91-92) to provide the "miracle" that joins them. To note the importance of this miracle at such a climactic point in the text (which could even now undo all that has been joined) is not, like Benedick, to see "a double meaning" where there is none (II. iii. 237), but rather to notice a motif the play emphasizes. That the miracle is here provided by the lovers themselves is as meaningful as "the miracle that Heaven provides" with Ragozine's death in *Measure for Measure*.

But if Benedick and Beatrice are, despite their surface contentiousness, willing to "follow the leaders" "in every good thing," they (unlike Claudio, the Prince, Leonato, and Antonio) "leave them at the next turning," "if they lead to any ill" (II. i. 135-138). Even Don John seems to follow in his meddling in the play. Don John merely mentions the marriage that will take place; Borachio offers the fact that he "can cross it" (II. ii. 3). While Don John asks how he can cross it, he must be prompted by Borachio that he "spare not to tell [his brother] that he hath wronged his honor in marrying the renowned Claudio (whose estimation do you mightily hold up) to a contaminated stale, such a one as Hero" (11. 19-22). Again Don John needs to be prompted. When he asks, "What proof shall I make of that?" Borachio replies, "Proof enough to misuse the Prince, to vex Claudio, to undo Hero, and kill Leonato"

(11. 24-25). The order proves prophetic enough in the climactic order he reveals. It also makes clear the degree of wasteful suffering his meddling causes others in order to "misuse" the Prince.

Don John, though "a plain-dealing villain" (I. iii. 28), is thus rare among Shakespeare's villains in that another proposes his "miching mallecho" rather than his initiating it. He, like Antonio and Leonato, those "two old men without teeth" (V. i. 116), cannot "bite" (I. iii. 30-31). If Antonio's line that titles this paper is delivered to Leonato with comic impotence as he challenges Claudio and the Prince ("Come, 'tis no matter. / Do not meddle"), the line is not without significance to the play as a whole. So too is it important that Don John does not initiate the villainy. He is a villain appropriate for a comedy; dangerous enough to devise "brave punishments" for and yet not so powerful that he can defeat the festive and amorous victories at the play's end. As the pipers strike up and the dance begins, we realize that it is appropriate that Benedick, rather than the Prince or Leonato or Claudio, advise us that we "think not on him till to-morrow." Without much more ado, the dance begins.

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Notes

¹William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, edited Josephine Waters Bennett (1958, rpt. Baltimore, Maryland: Penquin Books, Inc., 1962), V. i. 100-101. All subsequent quotations from *Much Ado* in this paper are from this edition and are included in the body of the text.

²John Dover Wilson, *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) is, of course, but one of those who have traditionally dubbed *Much Ado* one of the happy or "joyous" comedies.

³M.M. Mahood in her introduction to volume 32, "The Middle Comedies," of *Shakespeare Survey*, 1979, admirably surveys "a generation of criticism," as she entitles her work. For those who see the harsher view of *Much Ado*, she points to A.P. Rossiter, *Angel With Horns*, and those who focus on the frailties of Claudio, pp. 1-13.

⁴*Shakespeare Quarterly*, 8 (1957), 353-358.

⁵Ralph Berry, *Shakespeare's Comedies: Explorations in Form* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972); Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, 1960, rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); B.K. Lewalski, "Love, Appearance, and Reality: Much Ado About Something," *Studies in English Literature* (1968), 235-251.

**RHETORIC AS CHARACTER:
THE FORUM SPEECHES
IN JULIUS CAESAR
By G.M. Pinciss**

Shakespeare's indebtedness to his chief source, North's translation of Plutarch, is so great that one tends to assume Plutarch described the arguments of Brutus and Mark Antony over Caesar's body. But, in fact, both the formulation and the content of the two Forum speeches (III. ii.) in *Julius Caesar* are entirely the playwright's invention.¹ Their originality and the fact that they are the turning point of the action make them especially worthy of close attention: they merit study for their manipulation of rhetorical devices and furthermore they are valuable for what they reveal of character and personality.² As usual in Shakespeare, the way a man uses language reveals fundamental aspects about his nature; the style of address conveys important information about the attitude and disposition of the speaker.

In addition, there were many in Shakespeare's audience who appreciated his subtlety and skill in writing the two contrasted funeral speeches. Trained in an educational system that stressed rhetoric and public speaking, they would have listened with intense interest to the prose style of Brutus, who turns to rhetorical patterns made popular by John Lyly's *Euphues*, and to the poetry of Mark Antony, who seems to have taken Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* for his handbook on public address.³

The prose of Brutus's Forum speech is closely built on the three devices basic in euphuistic writing: isocolon (successive phrases or clauses of about the same length); parison (successive members of the same form, so that word corresponds to word); and paramoion (similarity of sound between words and syllables).⁴ These elements from Lyly's *Euphues* are pervasive in Brutus' phraseology. A close look at the main body of his address (III. iii. 13-37) will expose the underlying method of its composition and ultimately the way in which Shakespeare uses this mode both to express the content and to delineate the speaker.

Shakespeare has organized Brutus's remarks into four sections: 1) an invocation or call for attention; 2) a statement of the argument or cause; 3) a summing-up of the consequences of the argument explaining Brutus' actions; and 4) a challenge suggesting the irrefutability of his claims. Each of these points is phrased euphuistically.

The invocation is restated three times in parallel construction (isocolon and parison):

*hear. . .for my cause; be silent that you may hear
believe. . .for mine honour, respect. . .that you may believe
censure. . .wisdom; awake. . .that you may the better judge*

Brutus then moves into his main argument -- that his great love for Caesar was overcome by his greater love for Rome. The balanced expression of this claim is then rephrased as a rhetorical question (isocolon again):

Had you rather *Caesar* were *living*, and die all *slaves*,
than that *Caesar* were *dead*, to *live* all free *men*?

The rhetorical question is a device that Mark Antony will also favor. Here it succeeds in making the listener assume that dying as a slave is the only possible consequence of allowing Caesar to live. This effect is accomplished by reversing the sequence of the verbs (Caesar-living-die; Caesar-dead-live) and contrasting "slaves" with "free men."

In the third division of his speech, Brutus offers a restatement and summary of his conduct stressing its righteousness and using isocolon and parison. It continues his practice of reversing a sequence: the last four lines reverse the order of the first four. The effect, once again, emphasizes the inevitability and appropriateness of the speaker's behavior.

- 1 Caesar loved me, I weep for him
- 2 as he was fortunate I rejoice at it
- 3 as he was valiant, I honour him
- 4 But as he was ambitious, I slew him
- 5 tears for his love
- 6 joy for his fortune
- 7 honour for his valour
- 8 death for his ambition

Four of Caesar's qualities are listed, and for each of them we are told Brutus' response. Then these responses are presented as the logical and just reactions to Caesar's nature. The method is somewhat stodgy and plodding, but the point of the argument is easily followed and the result is not unpersuasive.

The final section of the oration again uses the rhetorical question, this time combining isocolon, parison, and paromion:

Who is here so base, that would be a bondsman?
Who is here so rude, that would not be a Roman?
Who is here so vile, that will not love his country?

The response Brutus provides to each question is identical: "If any, speak; for him have I offended." His answer takes on weight from incremental repetition. Repeating this challenge after each of the three questions, he then pauses to allow the crowd to reaffirm his argument and brings his formal oration to a close with a fourth rephrasing: "Then none have I offended." A sense of finality and justice is admirably achieved.

The cleverness of Brutus' method should not be underestimated: his speech has been rightly called "an extremely shrewd and highly effective

piece of oratory."⁵ Indeed, some like Granville-Barker, even prefer his argument to Mark Antony's.⁶ With only his reputation for honor as defense against an accusation that Caesar was ambitious--in itself hardly a mortal sin--and with only that fault to charge him with, Brutus has helped murder the "foremost man of all the world." Unlike Mark Antony, Brutus cannot cite specific examples to support his claim that Caesar was dangerous. But simply by providing his own responses to his own questions, he manages to persuade the populace to accept his argument. It is an impressive performance even when we remember that an anxious crowd is easily guided.

What also makes this performance exceptional is the self-assurance, not to say the egotism of the speaker. In his oration what strikes the ear first is the very large number of personal references: his favorite words are "I," "me," and "mine." Brutus, it appears, believes he can defend the morality of his murder of Caesar by telling us about Brutus. It is an astonishing fact that one can hear the entire speech through to the very exit of Brutus and learn only three lines before he leaves the stage that others may have been involved in the assassination. (Even then this reference, allowing Mark Antony to speak "By our permissions," sounds rather like the royal "we.") Only a man very certain of his rectitude and strong in ego would fail to bolster his defense by naming those public figures who joined with him. Such a man must be either foolish, as Brutus is not, or proud, self-assured, and self-righteous.⁷

Finally, one must consider the model Shakespeare has adopted for this prose. Studied, controlled, dispassionate, the euphuistic manner might shine in the study, but it could hardly be expected to sustain its luster in the hard light of the Forum. Brutus, the scholar, has prepared what is, in effect, a formal, slightly old-fashioned, but nevertheless artfully constructed personal apologia. We admire the intelligence with which his defense is presented and phrased, at the same time we realize its limitations. Although Shakespeare gives Brutus a finer hand at molding language and choosing words, he grants Mark Antony greater skill at public debating and deeper knowledge of mob psychology, both of which are ultimately more important when the goal is gaining and holding public confidence.

Shakespeare's Brutus chose a literary model to design a speech for a political occasion. Mark Antony, however, is presented as a more astute politician. His training as a demagogue is indebted to his study of Sir Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique*, the "most complete treatment of rhetoric in English and the only one that goes beyond compilation and close paraphrase of earlier works."⁸ It hardly needs adding that no single source can take full credit for the two Forum speeches--Shakespeare's own genius

excepted--but it will be a part of our analysis to note the coincidence of Wilson's instruction and Antony's practice. Since Mark Antony's oration makes use of techniques that are analyzed by Wilson, we will find it helpful in interpreting Antony's address to know which specific methods an English rhetorician recommended for a particular result.

For purposes of analysis, we may divide Antony's speech into several stages. The first three are covered in his opening lines. He begins appropriately with a plea for attention and silence, employing an "entrance into an oration" that Wilson calls a "close, or privie getting of favour." Antony rightly chooses this manner to begin because in his case the populace who must act in judgment "by a former tale be perswaded to take parte against him" and because they may be "weries with hearing."⁹

Antony professes that ambition is a grievous fault, that he has not come to praise Caesar. He knows

nothing should be spoken at the first, but that which might please the Judge, and not to be acknowne once to thinke of that, which yet we minde most of all to perswade. Therefore, when the hearers are some what calmed, we may enter by little and little into the matter, and say that those things, which our adversary doth mislike in the person accused, we also doe mislike the same. And when the hearers are thus wonne, wee may say that all which was saide nothing toucheth us, and that we minde to speake nothing at al against our adversaries, neither this way nor that way.¹⁰

After acknowledging the high reputation and nobility of Caesar's assassins--not attacking them directly--Antony begins the rebuttal of Brutus' charges with a personal remembrance: "He was my friend, faithful and just to me." As a next stage of his address he lists three positive examples of Caesar's character--only the last of which actually counters the charge of ambition: Caesar's refusal of the crown.

This section of the oration ends with a display of personal emotion and an appeal for sympathy. Antony claims to require time to regain his composure; and this pause conveniently provides him with a chance to observe how his remarks are affecting his audience, and to gauge his future words.

Just as Wilson recommends, Mark Antony has moved quickly into giving specific examples:

If the Judges or hearers, shalbe weries with other reportes before, it is best to go to the matter, and prove it out of hande, with as briefe reasons and as strong as can be gathered possible. And in proving of our matters we had neede evermore, rather to weye our reasons. . . . Whereas we used the best reasons at the first, wee should also reserve some that were like good for the latter end: that the hearers might have them fresh in their remembrance when they should give judgement.¹¹

These first 35 lines close with an appeal for emotional responsiveness from his audience. Antony has taken Wilson's advice to heart: "And assuredly, it is no small cunning to move the hearts of men, either to mirth, or sadnesse: for he that hath such skill, shall not lightly faile of his purpose what soever matter he taketh in hand."¹²

In the third book of *The Arte of Rhetorique*, Wilson classifies metaphors whose use he considers essential to "perswade effectuously." The second category of metaphor occurs whenever we "goe from the creature without reason, to that which hath reason, or contrary from that which hath reason to that which hath no reason."¹³ Mark Antony takes him quite literally: "O judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts, / And men have lost their reason!" It is a very subtle irony, in a speech full of that literary device, that Antony calls for reason when his appeal is so thoroughly emotional.

Having heard with satisfaction the responses of some members of his audience, Antony resumes his speech by continuing his indirect attack on the conspirators, again in accordance with Wilson's instruction: "Neither were it wisdom openly to speake against them, which are generally well esteemed and taken for honest men."¹⁴ Antony has saved his very strongest point in Caesar's favor for last: Caesar's will. He teases and taunts the crowd by telling them that Caesar's testament profits them directly, but he refuses to read the document. As he could have learned from Wilson, by promising to "tell them things concerning either their owne profit, or the advancement of their countries, no doubt we shall have them diligent hearers."¹⁵ Interest and attention are sustained by Antony's deliberate suspense: he will not read the will until the populace has witnessed the body of Caesar and heard an account of the murder. The narration of the death of Caesar (by one who was not present at the time) is graphic and immediate. By his emotional account of Caesar's death and by displaying the mangled body, Antony thoroughly discredits the conspirators. His description of the murder ends with his first direct attack on them: it was a deed of "bloody treason."

With the mob frenzied and the direct assault on his enemies now underway, Antony next works to assure their support. He contrasts his opponents, "wise and honourable" men, with himself, "a plain blunt man." He presents himself as a speaker who improvises his remarks. His words are spoken in the manner Wilson commends:

seeming upon present occasion, evermore to take place, and so to be devised, as though wee speake altogether, with out any great studie, framing rather our tale to good reason, then our tongue to vaine painting of the matter.¹⁶

His words are appropriately simple and monosyllabic: "I only speak right on. / I tell you that which you yourselves do know."

I come not friends to steal away your hearts.
 I am no orator, as Brutus is,
 But (as you know me all) a plain blunt man,
 That love my friend; and that they know full well
 That gave me public leave to speak of him.
 For I have neither wit, nor words, nor worth,
 Action, nor utterance, nor the power of speech
 To stir men's blood.

Antony knows that his claims to modesty and innocence will find a responsive chord among his hearers:

We shall get favour for our owne sakes, if we shall modestly set forth our bounden dueties, and declare our service done, without al suspicion of vaunting, either to the common weale, as in serving either in the warres abroad, or else in bearing some office at home. or in helping our frends. . .and lastly, if wee shewe without all ostentation, aswell our good willes towards the Judges.¹⁷

The infuriated mob is now ready to fly to vengeance. Antony restrains them first in order to arm them against his opponents' verbal cleverness who "will, no doubt, with reasons answer you." He himself leaves them firmly committed to purely emotional, irrational responses: "rise and mutiny." And again he insists that the populace remain to hear the points of Caesar's will. One might think that the pitch of emotion would be lost, that the unthinking passion of their anger against Brutus and his fellows would be dissipated by the details of Caesar's bequests. But Antony knows the will itself will ultimately prove to his own advantage. As Maynard Mack has recognized:

Antony no longer needs this as an incentive to riot: the mingled rage and pity he has aroused will take care of that. But when the hangover comes, and you are remembering how that fellow looked swaying a little on the rope's end, with his eyes bugging out and veins knotted at his temples, then it is good to have something really reasonable to cling to, like seventy-five drachmas (or even thirty pieces of silver) and some orchards along a river.¹⁸

And so he reads to them of Caesar's munificence as though that were the final proof against the charge of ambition.

Confirmed in their intent to seek instant revenge, the mob is at last released to mischief: "Here was a Caesar! when comes such another?" His speech has had exactly the effect he desired: "Domestic fury and fierce civil strife," "Blood and destruction" were his prophecy over the body of Caesar and his words have now accomplished his purpose. The traitors' houses will be burned instantly and in a mad frenzy the mob will tear Cinna the poet limb from limb.

As a student of politics with ambitions as a demagogue, Mark Antony would have done well to follow Wilson's instruction. *The Arte of Rhetorique*

is easily the most psychologically oriented of the many English handbooks on language. To a far greater degree than its English predecessors or even its successors, Sir Thomas's manual makes considerable effort to explain what effects will be produced by what oratorical and linguistic devices. Quite deliberately and with sound psychological insight, Wilson recommends certain techniques for plaintiff, others for defense, some for demonstration, others for persuasion. Specific schemes and tropes as well as methods of organization are often prescribed for specific psychological ends. The very formula for Antony's emotional speech could have been found here.

These two different approaches point up the basic distinction between the two orators. Brutus, with his trust in reason and the reasonableness of men, believes that he can persuade others by logic and argument--even when the logic is weak and the argument faulty. He delivers according to Wilson an "oration demonstrative"; "when a man is commended, or dispraised, for any act committed in his life"; Antony, on the other hand, would rather counter Brutus's appeal by turning not to reason but to emotion: "hee which useth perswasion, seeketh by arguments to compasse his devise: he that labours to exhort, doth stirre affection."²⁰

Since Mark Antony intends to incite revolution, he relies for his effectiveness as T.S. Dorsch has noted not on the "use of imagery or obvious rhetorical tricks, but on structure; Antony carries the crowd with him for the most part by a series of short, direct statements, so arranged as to lead their thoughts and their feelings in a particular direction."²¹

Brutus, cast as a Renaissance man of sophistication and refinement, might well imitate the mannerisms of Lyly's prose. An artificial and aristocratic style like that of *Euphues* is an appropriate literary mode for a conservative who clearly thinks himself unexcelled in intelligence and reputation and who even uses his high opinion of himself as evidence of his rectitude and good sense. By contrast, Mark Antony, seen as a rabble-rouser, intending to turn the populace against Brutus and the conspirators, might well follow the guidance of a successful Elizabethan courtier in delivering his address.

But questions of character apart, the two Forum speeches, however clearly Lyly and Wilson may serve as models, ultimately stand as evidence of the playwright's genius. By juxtaposing these two very differently constructed speeches, Shakespeare is delighting his audience, alert to the techniques of rhetoric, sensitive to language, and appreciative of its skillful manipulation. It is, finally, a demonstration of the playwright's virtuosity to argue both sides of the case, to set one address in prose, the other in verse, and to adopt a different set of rhetorical principles for each.

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Notes

¹T.S. Dorsch, editor Arden *Julius Caesar* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p.xiv and p. 78 footnote 11. 13-35; p. 136. All quotations are from this edition of the play. Plutarch refers to Brutus's "brief compendious manner of speech of the Lacedaemonians" and to Mark Antony's "asiatic style of oratory," but these remarks can scarcely have shaped the two speeches. Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (New York, 1964) V, 45-66; 91; 255. With regard to other classical sources, Ernest Schanzer, *Shakespeare's Appian* (Liverpool, 1956) finds "there is no kinship in manner or content between Brutus' oration in Appian and in *Julius Caesar*." And in his judgment the factual and verbal echoes that Antony's speech in Shakespeare may share with Appian's version are of less importance than the fact that in both addresses one finds "a great theatrical, almost operatic, performance." (pp. xx-xxii) For a demurrer see Pat M. Ryan Jr.'s letter in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 44 (1958) pp. 72-73.

²For a discussion of the writing and style of the play as a whole see Mark Van Doran's essay in *Shakespeare* (New York, 1939); Maurice Charney, *Shakespeare's Roman Plays* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961); and R.A. Foakes, "An Approach to *Julius Caesar*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* V (1954) 263-70. For a discussion of rhetoric and its influence on the drama see Madeleine Doran, *Endeavors of Art* (Madison, 1964). For a technical description of the figures and devices in the Forum scene see Jean Fuzier, "Rhetoric versus Rhetoric: A Study of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Act III, Scene 2," *Cahiers Elisabethains* No. 5 (April, 1974), 26-65.

³The point is not that Lyly or Wilson served as sources for Shakespeare, but rather that each offered him a possible model for organization and a technique that could be used to portray character.

⁴Lyly's *Euphues*, passim.

⁵Croll and Clemons, eds. *Euphues* (London, 1916), pp. xv-xvii. R.W. Zandvoort in "Brutus' Forum Speech in *Julius Caesar*," *RES* XVI (1940) 62-66 also analyzes the influence of euphuistic technique.

⁶Ernest Schanzer, *Shakespeare's Problem Plays* (London, 1963), pp. 47-48.

⁷*Prefaces to King Lear, Cymbeline, and Julius Caesar* (London, 1927) I, p. 105.

⁸Using an entirely different approach from mine, Gordon Ross Smith finds Brutus to be similar in personality. See his "Brutus, Virtue, and Will." *Shakespeare Quarterly* X (1959) 367-379.

⁹O.B. Hardison, Jr., ed. *English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance* (New York, 1963), p. 24. Perhaps it may be as well here to comment on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* which analyzes the means of persuasion through argument and through appeal to emotions: there is no evidence of Shakespeare's awareness of Aristotle's discussion of how to win over an audience through logic or passion. On the contrary, Aristotle's work seems not to have been included in the grammar school courses of study. Furthermore, a Latin edition of the *Rhetoric* was not published in England until 1619 and an English translation did not appear until 1686. Despite the fact that it was known by some humanists, the last two Tudor monarchs, and Sir Philip Sidney, Aristotle's work seems to have had little impact on the actual rhetorical training of the century. Doran, p. 37.

¹⁰All quotations are taken from the 1560 edition edited by G.H. Mair (Oxford, 1909), p. 103. I have followed modern usage with i-j, u-v, and long s. For a discussion of Shakespeare's possible knowledge of Wilson's book see Hardin Craig, "Shakespeare and Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique* An inquiry into the criteria for Determining Sources," *Studies in Philology* XXVIII (1931) 618-630.

¹¹Wilson, pp. 103-104.

¹²pp. 158-159.

¹³p. 105.

¹⁴p. 173.

¹⁵p. 104. Mark Antony's repetition of "Honourable men" is an example of what Wilson calls "close jesting." "When we jest closely, &c. with dissembling means grig our fellowe, when in words we speake one thing, and meane in heart an other thing, declaring either by our countenance, or by utterance, or by some other way, what our whole meaning is." p. 184.

¹⁶p. 101.

¹⁷p. 105.

¹⁸Wilson, p. 102.

¹⁹"Julius Caesar," reprinted in *Modern Shakespeare Criticism*, edited by Alvin Kernan (New York, 1970), pp. 298-99.

²⁰p. 17; p. 14.

²¹pp. lxii-ff. See also Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," *Style in Language*, edited by Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp. 350-377. Jakobson shows how Antony's speech accumulates power and dramatic force "by playing on grammatical categories and constructions...changing alleged reasons for Caesar's assassination into plain linguistic fictions." p. 375.

LEAR'S INCOMPLETE CATHARSIS: A MISCONCEPTION OF LOVE

By Paula T. Archer

There is certainly little doubt as to whether *King Lear*¹ can be considered a tragedy, but there does exist some debate over whether any positives at all emerge at the play's conclusion. Indeed one can not help feeling "the weight of this sad time" (V. iii. 324), but it is quite hard to define just what that weight is. Of course Lear's fall leads the reader to despair, as does the seeming triumph of evil and the death of Cordelia, but it is especially difficult to understand what exactly Lear accomplishes in his suffering and eventual death. Few would argue with Paul Jorgensen when he says that "The core of the play is not what happens *to* Lear but what happens *within* Lear."² So, in following this extraordinary king through the play, it should be possible to come to some conclusion as to what it is he learns about himself, and what it is within Lear that constitutes the undeniable perception of his life as tragic. Returning to the text and closely attending both the language and the symbolic dramatic gestures connected with Lear, one finds that Lear does learn, but he learns little. While he does discover his errors of pride and assumed divinity, he fails to acknowledge the other critical mistake he makes in Act I: his misconception of love. And yet it is precisely this misconception of love that prevents him from ever crossing over the threshold of full enlightenment. Hence it becomes evident that Shakespeare's crafty employment of *incomplete* catharsis is what marks this play as a tragedy; one made all the more tragic by the reader's seeing what it is Lear fails to see: the character and endurance of love.

First, any misgivings that might develop over the notion of a tragedy's being a tragedy without full enlightenment occurring must be dispelled. It is popular to place certain constraints on the use of tragedy when speaking of Shakespeare, constraints such as Jorgensen's view that "An audience does not experience the fullest of tragic pleasure unless the protagonist recognizes what the audience sees is wrong in his view of himself and of life."³ This idea certainly applies to Greek drama, but not to the drama of Renaissance England. Not only were sixteenth century European dramatists such as Shakespeare unaware of the Greek classical tradition⁴ (*King Lear* was created by him around 1605-1606), but the contemporary impetus toward innovation would certainly have outweighed any need to work within those confinements had they been known. Sewall comments: "The Elizabethans, whose nervous and independent force worked creatively on whatever form they chose, expanded and improvised to suit their own expressive needs."⁵ Even Bradley warns that "Caution is very necessary in making comparisons

between Shakespeare and the Greek dramatists. A tragedy like *Antigone* stands, in spite of differences, on the same ground as a Shakespearean tragedy; it is a self-contained whole with a catastrophe."⁶

Next, one must venture upon a conception of love in terms of Shakespeare's era and in the terms which he provided in his writings. In this way, *Lear*, *Cordelia*, and the concept of love in the play will be more clear. It is known that Christian and Platonic influences were prevalent at the time Shakespeare was writing, so it seems fitting to explore how each of these schools of thought viewed the idea of love. St. Augustine provides a traditional Christian concept:

...it is to be asked whether man is to be loved by man for his own sake or for the sake of something else [Charity]. . . man is to be loved for the sake of something else. In that which is to be loved for its own sake the blessed life resides; and if we do not have it for the present, the hope of it now consoles us. . . For he is the best man who turns his whole life toward the immutable life and adheres to it with all his affection. But if he loves himself on his own account [Pride] he does not turn himself toward God, but, being turned toward himself, he does not care for anything immutable.⁷

Love, therefore, is not vain nor subject to barter but shared as if a gift, and once one has it, it does not go away, change, grow, nor die, but continues infinitely from man to man. God, of course, is that "something else" which is to be loved for its own sake for He gave life, and one naturally loves Him for His gift, hence what all men have in common is the same gift--life--as well as the love of Him who gave it. This view of love sounds very similar to Socrates' account of Eros in *The Symposium*:

[Love] the Beautiful. . . exists by itself in itself, eternally, and in one form only, and all other beautiful things participate in it in such a way that, while they come into being and perish, it does not, nor does it become greater or less, nor is it affected by anything. . . to know, in the end, what beauty is. Here above all places. . . is the life that is worth living for a man, lived in the contemplation of the Beautiful itself.⁸

So, again love is shown as a consciousness, fully conceived and distinguishable from all other images of beauty by its immortality, immutability, and excellence. In fact, it is precisely this goodness that attracts one to it, and when one finally does encounter it, he is forever fused to it, since he recognizes it as the true beauty and goodness in his existence. It is worthwhile to note Aristophanes when he considers "The reason for this [the soul's desire toward divinity] is that our original nature was to be whole. And to the longing for wholeness the name 'love' has been attached."⁹ Yet, while the "eros-love is acquisitive/egocentric/nonpersonal"¹⁰ and seems diametrically

opposed to the Christian view of "agape [which is] bestowed as a gift. . . without a reason,"¹¹ S.Q. Groden concludes that very little difference exists between them since "Being good and being God-loved, are essentially the same."¹² Hence it is a reliable assumption that either or both of these philosophies influenced the Elizabethan view of love.

One need only look to Shakespeare's Sonnets to confirm this assumption and to get a clear sense of what love meant to the author of *King Lear*. Danby finds that Shakespeare weaves his own personal views into both his Sonnets and his plays:

Even now criticism is loth to claim anything for Shakespeare the man on the mere strength of what it knows about Shakespeare the dramatist. It follows that everything Shakespeare says is credited with "dramatic truth" only. As such, it is explained away. But Shakespeare, I think, was interested in other truths beside the "dramatic". I feel certain that *King Lear* is not more impersonal than the Sonnets are. And the Sonnets are not all or not merely formal "dramatic" exercises.¹³

So the Sonnets and *King Lear* can be thought to hold more than totally objective truths. This is not to say that Shakespeare did intend *King Lear* to seem like a Morality play anymore than it suggests the play was intentionally Christian. But it does imply that Shakespeare intended the reader to perceive what *he meant* love to mean in the play, and that he intended it unambiguously. His plays and his poems ultimately deal with the question of value in human existence; and, in fact, Shakespeare's strongest language concerning love as that value is found in Sonnet 116:

Let me not to the marriage true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds;
Or bends with the remover to remove:
Oh, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.¹⁴

There can be no doubt, then, what Shakespeare intended when he used the word "love," whether it be here or in his other works. He is not being merely objective or vague when he says that love is an "ever-fixed mark," that it is "never shaken," or that "Love alters not," not even at "the edge of doom," he is being an Elizabethan poet. And when France expresses in *King Lear*

exactly what love *is not*, he is no less being Shakespeare's poetic voice:

Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards that stands
Aloof from th'entire point.

(I. i. 238-240)

And "th'entire point" of love, both in Shakespeare's Sonnets and in *King Lear*, is to provide man with a capability "to appraise, estimate, or state the price or value of" (OED) his existence; in a sense to ennoble his mortality. So it follows that if Lear can be said to have had a full catharsis, he must proceed from his gross misconception of love demonstrated in the first scene to one that closely resembles that held by the author and his representative(s) in the play.

Returning to the text of the play, one can examine just how Lear does proceed in his conception of love. It is not merely conjecture to suggest that Shakespeare intended the reader to look at the play focusing on the issue of love since the basis for this is firmly laid in the emblematic nature of the opening scene. The first line is about Kent's confusion over Lear's seemingly changed love for the two dukes: "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (I. i. 1-2). Even Gloucester is confused by Lear's changed behaviour: "It did always seem so to us; but now in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the Dukes he values most" (I. i. 3-5). It is evident from these lines that Lear has indeed broken with the tradition of giving his favor to the ones he loves and is giving equally to both his sons-in-law without discrimination. So the question of values is immediately posed: when Lear demonstrates how he cannot rightly choose between truth and falsehood, love and hate, good and evil, the reader infers that he will be placed in the position to do so. Gloucester's abrupt changing of the subject seems less abrupt when it is observed that he too fails to judge better from worse in terms of his sons: "But I have a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave came something saucily to the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledg'd" (I. i. 19-24). From this balanced set of value conflicts, Shakespeare calls attention to the fact that a learning process is about to begin and that this process is central to the entire play. Yet Kent will not be the only student of love who, by telling Edmund, "I must love you, and sue to know you better" (I. i. 30), sees the virtue in withholding value judgements before all the facts are before him. Edmund will not be the only one who will "study deserving" (I. i. 31) love, for as Gloucester points out: "The King is coming" (I. i. 33) for his first lesson in the appraisal of love through his very own contrived examination.

It is both ironic and totally inadequate to refer to what occurs in the remainder of Act I as a love test for it ignores the exposition of the other two

crucial faults in Lear's nature: his tendency toward pride and his self-deification. That he is king, no one yet disputes. That he is typically feudal and a bit tyrannical all can see. But he abuses his title when he attempts to command his subjects and his family to alter plain truth his own liking. Later, he will stretch the Elizabethan notion of man's being a microcosm too far when he tries to assume actual sovereignty over the forces of the universe: "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow! / You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout" (III. ii. 1-2). Both of these errors he will eventually become aware of. But it cannot be denied that in this beginning act, a third, even more serious, weakness in Lear is stressed: his misconception of love. It is more serious because it will be his ability to recognize true love that will either sustain or fail Lear in his darkest moments, long after these other two faults have been recognized, just as it will be this that will influence his answer to his own question: "Is man no more than this" (III. iv. 102-103)?

Indeed the very constitution of the participants in Act I focuses on their conception of and capacity for love. What is seen quite clearly is that Lear's actions and his language reveal a distorted idea of love for he speaks of it as a changeable phenomenon, something that can be measured out in degrees, sections, and values, just as he regards his sovereign domain: "Which of you shall we say doth love us most, / That we our largest bounty may extend / Where nature doth with merit challenge" (I. i. 51-53)? And so a test has begun, but it is not love that undergoes examination; it is each character's conception of love, and by scene's end, only Cordelia, Kent, and France emerge as having passed with any dignity. Goneril is immediately disliked since she mixes love with things mutable: "I love you more than. . . eyesight, . . . liberty, . . . health, beauty, [and] honor" (I. i. 54-58). Regan discredits her sincerity when she claims that "I am alone felicitate / In your dear Highness' love" (I. i. 75-76), for her very participation in this kind of hyperbolic rhetoric signals that she is alone felicitate in herself. One cannot help empathizing with Cordelia's dilemma when she frets: "I am sure my love's / More ponderous than my tongue" (I. i. 78-79) and "I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth" (I. i. 91-92), since her love (i.e. Shakespeare's conception of love) does not concern itself with such worldly, mutable things as territory, title, or royal favor. So, the reader immediately rallies behind Cordelia's stand and not an inch of his being desires her to waver, for what is at stake here is not just her marriage, her wealth, or even her relationship with her father, but the very credibility of love itself. Bradley, too, sees her unwillingness to verbalize her love as crucial to the play:

An expressiveness almost inexhaustible gained through paucity of expression; the suggestion of infinite wealth and beauty conveyed by the very refusal to reveal this beauty in expansive speech--this is at once the nature of Cordelia herself and the chief characteristic of Shakespeare's art in representing it.¹⁵

So genuine is Cordelia's defense of her love that, when Lear asks her "But goes thy heart with this?" (I. i. 104), the reader would recoil from any other answer but her "Ay, my good lord" (I. i. 105). And when Lear, embarrassed by his youngest daughter's wisdom, tests her position with fatherly reprimand: "So young, and so untender?" (I. i. 106), one applauds her firm reply: "So young, my lord, and true" (I. i. 107).

It is in this way that Cordelia's truth stands utterly naked so to be perceived by those--on the stage and off--who hold a careful conception of love. Likewise, it becomes clear that even though Lear has introduced himself to the reader as embracing his misinterpretation of love, he is now (for the first time in the play) surrounded by an environment conducive to correcting it in the persons of Cordelia, Kent, and France. But instead, his pride and hauteur prevent him from benefiting from this important opportunity and send him into a further entrenchment of his misconception:

I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery. Hence and avoid my sight!--
So be my grave my peace, as here I give
Her father's heart from her. (I. i. 123-126)

.....
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so,
But now her price has fallen. Sir, there she stands:
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, . . . (I. i. 196-199)

Still speaking in terms of love as mutable, measurable, and subject to recompense, he totally misses the truth that Cordelia has laid before him, that Kent tries to rephrase, and that France reinforces with those three poignant lines that resound in Sonnet 116:

Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards that stands
Aloof from th'entire point. (I. i. 238-240)

And so as the banished good leave the stage, confident in their conception of love, Lear appears just as wicked and unsubstantial as are his other two daughters. In a sense, this misguided king is robbed by his own hand of the very environment of true love; thus the reader becomes more aware that "He will have to learn then, like Everyman, what his essential worth is. . . . But he will not quickly change his view about what constitutes love."¹⁶

Before turning to the Storm Scenes and Lear's progression toward a conception of love, a defense of Cordelia's frankness in Act I is warranted to combat the mounting criticism that considers her emblematic nature as something less than total. Danby recalls that Coleridge was skeptical of her, saying that there existed "some little faulty admixture of pride and sullenness

in Cordelia's 'Nothing,' and that Ulrici felt that she was in the wrong for her own idiosyncrasies and for not "affectionately humouring the weakness of her aged father" but rather showing her "unfilial forwardness" and "unbecoming harshness."¹⁷ Similarly, Jorgensen considers Cordelia's "tactless manner of expression"¹⁸ her conception of love as an error almost as weighty as Lear's twisted understanding of the subject. But these critics seem to ignore the fact that Cordelia has every right to be angry with Lear for he has openly admitted his allegiance to false love and even goes so far as to try and force her to do the same. Cordelia shows honor, bravery, and truth in the face of hardship, and stands alone against the degrading pageantry that Lear has contrived.¹⁹

It seems clear that Shakespeare meant Cordelia to be love itself, pure, beautiful, and unyielding for the very purpose of distinguishing true love from false, good from evil, value from nothing. Danby, too, holds this steadfast view when he refutes Coleridge and sees Cordelia as "the norm by which the wrongness of Edmund's world and the imperfection of Lear's is judged. . . . She is the norm itself. As such she belongs to the utopian dream of the artist and of the good man."²⁰ Maynard Mark also realizes that "Cordelia, we may choose to say, accomplished nothing, yet we know it is better to have been Cordelia than to have been her sisters."²¹ But one need not rely on contemporary scholarship for support of Cordelia; Shakespeare certainly relied on his Christian-Platonic influences once again. St. Augustine states:

...this holy one will be of such simple and clean heart that he will not turn away from the Truth either in a desire to please men or for the sake of avoiding any kind of adversities to himself which arise in this life.²²

This is precisely the character of Cordelia. When we consider that even Christ exhibited anger when he drove the money changers from the temple, and that God brought down his wrath upon the world with the flood, Cordelia's "Nothing" seems mild in response to Lear's betrayal and attempted debasement of her ideal. Plato also would have been very much offended by Lear's behavior in Act I since he believed:

It is done basely when one gives one's affections to a base person, and does so in a low manner; when one does so to a good man and in a noble way, it is done beautifully. The man who is a lover in the common way is base--he loves the body rather than the soul. Neither is he constant, since he loves things which lack constancy.²³

Perhaps it is not going too far to imagine that Plato would have acted in much the same way that Cordelia does and that he would have indeed considered her refutation of Lear's misconception of love as quite eloquently delivered.

But one must return to the text and to the storm scenes in order to witness Lear's progress in becoming conscious of his sins of pride and self-appointed divinity, as well as to see whether he approaches a conception of love comparable to the magnitude of Cordelia's. He rails at the cosmos, but it will not be his toolshed for destruction. He then excuses its dumb ears with "You owe me no subscription" (III. ii. 16-18). From there he moves into a mood of self-pity, claiming that he is innocent of all the hardship that suddenly encompasses him when he offers: "I am a man/More sinn'd against than sinning" (III. ii. 59-60). Here is the first instance of Lear's holding back in his enlightenment. He is aware that he has sinned, but rather than make a full confession, he rests with justifying his actions and stubbornly embracing his misconception of love. He still feels he deserves love by virtue of his titles of king and father, though his god imagery is fading out of his vocabulary. The reader cannot deny that, when Lear proclaims to the elements: "Here I stand your slave / A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man" (III. ii. 19-20), he has recognized his *hubris* and is beginning the painful process toward humility. But, curiously enough, it is Lear's Fool who, in his long "prophecy", warns against interpreting this stage in Lear's development as the full repentance or rebirth the play has been anticipating. Here he wisely advises that only "When every case in law is right. . .Then comes the time [for order]" (III. ii. 87-93).

Lear continues to learn in Act III, scene iv, when he admits: "[This] tempest in my mind / Doth from my senses take all feeling else," but just when he might be adequately seasoned to acknowledge true love, he finishes the phrase with: "Save what beats there--filial ingratitude" (III. iv. 12-14). Here again, he has not moved forward in his conception of love but, in fact, seems to be moving farther away from one. He returns to the heath declaring that he has been an "old kind father, whose frank heart gave all" (III. iv. 20), but the reader does not swallow this lament anymore than Lear does. For no sooner does he say these words, than he ponders over his Fool's dilemma and begins chastizing himself for his past lack of charity toward the poor with: "O, I have ta'en / Too little care of this" (III. iv. 32-33). Even when he is heard to say to the ragged and crazed Edgar: "Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art thou come to this?" (III. iv. 49-50) and "Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?" (III. iv. 64), it is clear that Lear is still justifying his conception of love and feels that he is a peer of this unfortunate fellow. But Edgar's idea of love is not Lear's, so this assumed parallel is seen to be false. Lear's appraisal of human existence begins to slip, however, the more he studies Edgar, and so does the hope for Lear's full catharsis. When he says to Edgar: "Thou are the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, fork'd animal as thou art" (III. iv. 106-108), he identifies himself as a man who has fallen from his former identity as god-king,

sovereign of all the cosmos, and landed hard on earth, sorely hurting from the crash. Lear's cry of "Off, Off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here" (III. iv. 108-109) and his symbolic tearing off of his clothes are signs of his allegiance to the world of the earth, a full recognition of his mortality, a denial of any separation at all between man and beast, a disputation of the chain of being in which man sits just below the angels and just above the beast by sheer virtue of his soul's capacity to love.

This bleak view of man continues to trouble Lear when in the Mock Trial scene on the heath he attempts to peer into and understand his wicked daughters' hearts, yet curiously never thinking to peer into his own heart. While he orders Edgar and the Fool to "let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds about her heart," he finds no answer to his fundamental question: "Is there any cause in nature that make these hard hearts" (III. vi. 76-78)? What can be perceived here is that Lear is still trying to appraise matters of the heart in terms that belong to an entirely different realm. One must consider also that, just as in Act I, Lear's heath experiences are suffered in an environment of true love in the persons of Kent, Edgar, and the Fool; therefore the standard of love is present even if Cordelia is not. But still Lear does not learn the true appraisal of love. So what should be noted the next time Lear signals for his clothes to be unbuttoned is whether or not his frame of mind has moved closer to that of Cordelia's, since this time it clearly has moved farther away.

Act IV is crucial in terms of Lear's full catharsis for it is a poignant summary of Lear's progress thus far and serves to underscore the deep abyss that still exists between Cordelia's conception of love and Lear's. Shakespeare teases again with the hope of Lear's enlightenment in the reunion of Edgar and Gloucester since it points toward Lear's reunion with Cordelia later. The reader experiences the desire to stand up and cheer when Cordelia is once again in view complete with colors and army to defend (and possibly renew) her father. Her righteous statement of purpose, "No blown ambition doth our arms incite, / But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right. / Soon may I hear and see him!" (IV. iv. 27-29) also shows that her love for Lear has not changed. Here is a conception of love that, despite exile, rejection, and torment is, in truth, being celebrated as "love, dear love," not only in simple yet eloquent language but in sincere actions as well. And it is against this backdrop of true love restated through Cordelia that Lear is once again encountered.

But Lear is visibly and psychologically taxed as he regains the stage; he is mad. Yet, in his madness he reiterates his cognition of his previous faults of pride and deification when he admits; "the thunder would not peace at my bidding. . .they told me I was every thing. 'Tis a lie, I am not ague-proof" (IV. vi. 102-105). Here he totally acknowledges his mortality, but he does so as if

to be a man, instead of a god or a king, were the ultimate curse possible. He does not yet comprehend that being a mortal without giving or recognizing love is a far worse state. When one very much wants him to peer into his mortality and realize that positive element, embodied in Cordelia and in his aides who have been beside him all the time, he instead plunges into the most gross assessment of love that has been witnessed from him thus far in the entire play:

Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
 Was kinder to his father than my daughters
 Got 'tween the lawful sheets.
 To't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers. . . .
 Down from the waist they are Centaurs,
 Though women all above;
 But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
 Beneath is all the fiends': there's hell, there's darkness,
 There is the sulphurous pit, burning, scalding,
 Stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! pah, pah!
 Give me an ounce of civet; good apothecary,
 Sweeten my imagination. . . .(IV. vi. 114-131)

Considering that these powerful lines are spoken while Lear is again in the environment of true immutable love (Edgar and the reborn Gloucester) and that Cordelia has just finished fortifying her conception of love, it becomes quite clear that Lear's full catharsis is in very serious danger. When Gloucester makes the humblest of gestures in his "O, let me kiss that hand!" the reader, too, is offended by Lear's recoiling remark: "Let me wipe it first, it smells of mortality" (IV. vi. 132-133). It is not difficult to recognize that "Lear has reason enough for his fear and hatred, [but that] these feelings clearly represent a self-closing against the very possibility of giving or receiving love."²⁴ This self-closing has been seen before in Act I and differs here only in its deeper level of baseness. Moreover, St. Augustine once said, "No man ever hated his own flesh";²⁵ yet, in this play one meets a man who does.

Whether lucid or mad, Lear continues to demonstrate his degrading conception of love. True, the reader feels a profound sense of pity for Lear in his state of utter despair and debasement, but he cannot excuse Lear's passivity nor his rude, insensitive treatment of Gloucester's blindness. His sudden, seemingly unconnected, outburst: "No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll not love" (IV. vi. 137-138) soon becomes quite apt when one considers that Lear's mind is still dwelling in that "sulphurous pit" of ugly, stinking, bestial copulation (IV. vi. 122). In a sense, Gloucester's gesture of love, coming at the moment of Lear's revised conception of love as debased, naturally challenges that view and forces Lear to consider the implications of Gloucester's gesture. He must either revise his own view again or reject Gloucester's outright as a nonexistent, metaphysical, even mythical notion. So Lear's vow not to love

only further inhibits his full catharsis. As Danby sees it, "The madness negates all those positive values integrated into the figure of Cordelia. Its imagery is perversely sexual. Its central symbol is a counter-Cordelia."²⁶

And it is in this state of perversity that Lear again encounters Cordelia in the reconciliation scene. One can be sure of this for he speaks to her of poison, suicide, and punishment: "If you have poison for me, I will drink it. / I know you do not love me, for your sisters / Have (as I do remember) done me wrong: / You have some cause, they have not," while Cordelia answers exactly what the reader would expect: "No cause, no cause" (IV. vii. 71-75). Again she conducts herself as the norm of love itself; Lear, as its antithesis. Once more his catharsis is delayed for he still does not understand human love--its beauty, its immutability, its recreative force--any more than he understands why Cordelia insists that there is "no cause" for her not to love him. It is true that he kneels in a symbolic gesture of humility, but one must not focus solely on Lear's actions and ignore his language; he *says*, "I know you do not love me," and this contradicts his genuflection! He again fails to perceive what Cordelia represents and that she does, has, and will forever love him, regardless of his faults or offenses. What is truly astounding is that Lear, in the highest loving environment yet to surround him, and at a time so ripe for conceiving love, shies away from the threshold of full enlightenment again with this conflicting gesture and proclamation. Even Sewall agrees that "The scene of his awakening and reconciliation with Cordelia is as close to redemption as tragedy ever gets,"²⁷ but Lear never retracts his vow never to love, nor does he retract the notion that Cordelia does not love him, let alone verbalize or exhibit a new conception of love formed from her example. The reason for this would seem to be that "Cordelia is on a different plane from Lear, not tied to the wheel on which Lear has been bound. . . . [Hence his] regeneration is scarred."²⁸ And what has scarred it is not his environment, not the objective incidents that have confirmed his fall, but the same obstinacy to truth he has been demonstrating all along. Moreover, "a man can not love that which he does not believe to exist";²⁹ therefore, one can not truly refer to this scene as a reconciliation or rebirth since Lear does not believe that human beings can love in any other manner than that of beasts. Lear does not leave the stage reborn, renewed, or reconciled, and he tells us this himself: "Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish" (IV. vii. 84). He still does not consider himself *loved*.

Even in the final act, Lear receives two more chances for completing his enlightenment. He has already misconceived love as ceremonial tokenism in the Love Test, as base, bestial copulation in the Storm Scenes, and as nonexistent (or at best mutable) in the so-called Reconciliation Scene. That Shakespeare recalls these motifs of misconceived love in the Mock Love Test which opens Act V serves to clarify once more the acute dichotomy between

true human love and the debased mutable love that festers in Lear's mind and in the minds of Regan and Edmund. It is no surprise that Regan is concerned with Edmund's possible sexual relations with Goneril, but it does offend the play's sense of true love when Edmund supposes his love for Goneril to be "an honor'd love" (V. i. 9), for he belongs to that same darkness that Lear spoke of in Act IV. It is offensive, too, when, out of the symbolic war between good and evil in scene ii, evil emerges as the victor. But nothing offends the reader more than the Imprisoning Scene where Lear again demonstrates the same state of mind in which he left the stage in Act IV. He says to Cordelia:

Come let's away to prison:
 We two alone will sing like birds i'th'cage
 When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
 And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live
 And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too--
 Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out--
 And take upon 's the mystery of things.

(V. iii. 8-16)

Still he persists in speaking of forgiveness to Cordelia where none will ever be forthcoming. Still he concerns himself with the mystery of things mortal and mutable. Still he has learned so little of the mystery of man and what it is that separates him from the beasts and likens him to the angels. Still one perceives the irony and fruitlessness of his words, for "as long as he sees love as bound to worldly possessions. . . he cannot have Cordelia's kind of love and the reliable assurance about his own worth which it can give him."³⁰ The Lear who speaks of going to prison is a man whose concerns are still those of ceremony, and while he is no longer proud nor pretending to be divine, neither is he a man who will be contemplating the "Beautiful" itself. Instead, he is intent on contemplating man's folly in the temporal things of life: his folly! Once again, in the environment of true love with Cordelia at his side, and despite his immense suffering, Lear does not perceive love as the redeeming human quality.

It is not surprising, then, that his final conception of love is that love dies with the body of Cordelia. All the chances her presence--directly or in the persons of Kent, Edgar, the Fool, and finally Gloucester--provided him have failed to help him over the threshold to full enlightenment, so it is almost too much to expect him to achieve it alone at her death. Elton is mistaken when he says that "Lear's newfound 'faith' is pathetically and suddenly withdrawn from him by the murder of Cordelia,"³¹ for it has been shown that Lear never progresses to a faith in Cordelia's love. Lear's death is not the cathartic one Gloucester enjoys, whose "flaw'd heart. . . 'Twi'x't two extremes of passion, joy and grief / Burst smilingly" (V. iii. 197-199), nor even Edmund's redeeming

demise, who recognized: "Yet Edmund was belov'd! . . . I pant for life. Some good I mean to do, / Despite of mine own nature. . . ." (V. iii. 240-245). No, Lear dies in utter darkness and confusion, over "when one is dead, and when one lives" (V. iii. 261), and over the question "Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, / And thou no breath at all" (V. iii. 307-308)? What is more significant, and indeed more tragic, is that this question comes just after Lear has come so close to realizing Cordelia's life as "a chance which does redeem all sorrows / That ever I have felt" (V. iii. 267-268). Shakespeare takes Lear, and the reader, so close to the edge of a full catharsis that it is easy to acclaim prematurely that it has arrived. But Lear backs away from this vague articulation of Cordelia's worth. Instead of focusing on how truly she really did love him, Lear dwells on his remembrance that "Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in a woman" (V. iii. 273-274). The reader so strongly wants Lear to be reborn that he may tend to forget the debased conception of love that Lear has embraced to the end, as well as that Lear has so far kept his vow never to love. One must remember, too, that Cordelia's love is of the sort that at least makes rebirth a real possibility:

[Love] is procreation in a beautiful thing--of the body and the soul. . . . all humans are pregnant, physically and spiritually, and when we reach our prime, our nature desires to give birth. Nature is not capable of giving birth in the ugly, but only in the beautiful. . . . But whenever it approaches the ugly, it shrinks into itself, sullen and upset. It turns away, is repelled, and refuses to give birth. It holds back and carries the burden of what it has inside itself with pain. . . . But love is not. . . a love of the beautiful. . . . [But] of giving birth and procreation in the beautiful.³²

By recalling this, and that Lear has repeatedly held back his soul's natural desire to receive and give love, the full impact of Lear's tragedy unfolds. Now he is revealed as a mere remnant of a man who has refused to be reborn into a beautiful conception of love, refused to recognize Cordelia's love for him, refused to give up his hatred of his own mortality, and who indeed carries the burden of what he has inside himself to his grave: nothing. Even if one wanted to look at Lear's death from a Christian resurrectional perspective, he could not ignore that "immortality and purity of body arise from the health of the spirit, and the health of the spirit arises from a firm adherence to something more powerful, that is, the immutable God."³³ But Lear has not arrived at a healthy spirit nor has he exhibited a firm adherence to anything immutable.

And so it is Lear's final misconception of love that renders this play utterly tragic, while still offering the remaining characters and the reader nuances of positive hope. While Lear's being only senses Cordelia's value, it is they who conceive what it actually is. Even as Lear exclaims, "She's dead as earth" (V. iii. 262), it is apparent to everyone else that it is only Cordelia's

body that belongs to the earth. Lear may believe that "now she's gone forever" (V. iii. 271), but the mourners on and off the stage know that her love can never perish. One may share Lear's fury at the common beasts being granted life, but "If we condemn the universe for Cordelia's death, we ought to also remember that it gave her birth."³⁴ And if there is any positive at all that emerges from this play, it is the same positive that Shakespeare pronounced in his Sonnets and all his great works: True Love does exist and endure. It almost becomes irrelevant whether Cordelia lives or dies, for her love will endure so long as there are Edgars, Kents, Frances, Gloucesters, and Fools who "Speak what [they] feel, not what [they] ought to say" (V. iii. 325), who understand that love ennobles one's being here on earth, and that "It is in this way that everything mortal is preserved--not by its being utterly the same forever, like the divine, but by what is old and withdrawing leaving behind something else, something new, like itself. It is by this method. . . that the mortal partakes of immortality."³⁵ And, after all, that is what Lear originally set out to achieve.

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Notes

¹G. Blakemore Evans, "King Lear," in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), p. 1255. All further textual references are from this edition.

²Paul A. Jorgensen, *Lear's Self Discovery* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), p. 8.

³Jorgensen, p. 3.

⁴They were aware of the Roman Senecan tradition and of the Boethian redefinition of classical tragedy in *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.

⁵Richard B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), p. 2.

⁶A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan and Company Limited, 1926), Footnote number 2, p. 278.

⁷St. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1958), pp. 18-19.

⁸Plato, *The Symposium*, Trans. S.Q. Groden, Ed. J.A. Brentlinger (Boston: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1970), p. 92-93.

⁹Plato, p. 67.

¹⁰Plato, p. 119.

¹¹Plato, p. 117.

¹²Plato, p. 125.

¹³John F. Danby, *Shakespeare's Doctrine of Nature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 126.

¹⁴M.H. Abrahams et. al., *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1962), p. 485.

¹⁵Bradley, p. 282.

¹⁶Jorgensen, p. 98.

¹⁷Danby, p. 115.

¹⁸Jorgensen, p. 97.

¹⁹I would refer critics of Cordelia to another of Shakespeare's works, *The Merchant of Venice*, where there is more similarity with *King Lear* than the use of the word "bond." Indeed Lear's three daughters closely resemble Portia's three caskets in which the true value is hidden beneath outer appearances and in which inherent worth is equally harsh yet equally clear. I would ask these critics whether they would have preferred Portia to reveal to her first suitor in which of the caskets her picture lay, simply because it would have been less cruel to him and more expedient for her. But then that certainly would have clouded the waters, mixing seeming substance with real, rendering Shakespeare's meaning as truly ambiguous.

²⁰Danby, p. 138.

²¹Maynard Mack, *King Lear In Our Time* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 90.

²²St. Augustine, p. 40.

²³Plato, p. 51.

²⁴S.L. Goldberg, *An Essay on King Lear* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 136.

²⁵St. Augustine, p. 20.

²⁶Danby, p. 192.

²⁷Sewall, p. 27.

²⁸Danby, p. 138.

²⁹St. Augustine, p. 31.

³⁰Jorgensen, p. 99.

³¹William R. Elton, *King Lear and The Gods* (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1966), p. 262.

³²Plato, p. 85-86.

³³St. Augustine, p. 20.

³⁴Bradley, p. 305.

³⁵Plato, p. 87.



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