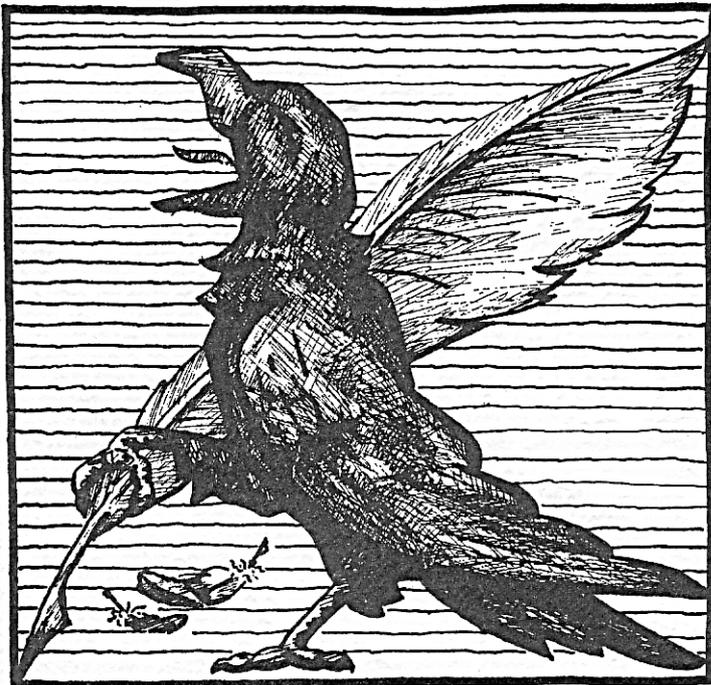


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About anyone so great as Shakespeare, it is probable that we can never be right; and if we can never be right, it is better that we should from time to time change our way of being wrong.

—T. S. Eliot

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

—Walter Pater

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

—Paul Valery

Submission of Manuscripts

Essays submitted for publication should not exceed fifteen to twenty double-spaced typed pages, including notes. Follow journal format which is MLA style with slight variations. Quotations should be single spaced in typescript. When submitting manuscripts, send two copies—the original and one xeroxed copy. Allow six months for readers. Please encourage your libraries to subscribe to the publication. Institutional rate is \$12.00 for two issues of the journal.

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And thou treble-dated crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st
With the breath thou giv'st and tak'st,
'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go.

—*The Phoenix and Turtle*

William E. Bennett
April 15, 1924—July 18, 1983





Two Elegies for William E. Bennett

By Paul Ramsey

Where Are the Dead Absent?

The dead are absent in the tracery of ferns,
In the rocks and mosses of the mountainside,
In the surf's clamor, in the cold moon's space
Beyond the silencings of seas dismissed,
In the dawn's insistence, in recurrent mist,
In clouds we would barter for a late gravestone,
Offered in swirls of loss and unreturned—
In hopes and fears and pains and claims and trials.
Return their absence, walking in the instancy of prayer.
A blessing echoes lightly and replies.

Song for the End of the Day

Flocks by fieldlight
Travel homeward.

Clouds are distanced
Towards arrival.

Light into the darkness
Reaches.

Lament and celebration
Waken.

Nid Archodd Duw I'r Fran Deui:
A Memoir of Bill Bennett
 by James R. Andreas

Bill Bennett was given the old Welsh proverb of the title while travelling in the British Isles. He was attending a meeting of the Shakespeare Association at Stratford-upon-Avon to promote his new journal, *The Upstart Crow*. Bill meant to include the proverb in the issue of the *Crow* he never lived to complete, the present volume which will stand as a memorial for his many contributions to Shakespearean scholarship. The proverb translates: "God never intended the crow to be quiet."¹ It captures the feisty spirit of both the man and his magazine.

Bill Bennett was not a quiet, patient man. He was a gentle person, to be sure, but was outspoken in his opinions about an immense range of interests. His problem was that he knew so much—about medicine, because of his undergraduate training in the area; about languages, especially Latin, which he labored to re-establish at our rural university; and, of course, about Shakespeare's poetry, which he loved above all things academic and helped to keep alive in the remote regions of western Tennessee. Bill was a brilliant conversationalist, discussing these diverse matters with a broad smile and a most contagious laugh. When he was well, he presided over "The Poet's Corner," the name given by the English faculty—with Bill's characteristic modesty—to its departmental lounge.

Of course, his knowledge of Shakespeare provided the expertise to judge and edit the contributions that were sent to him from all over the United States, Canada, and England, and from such exotic places as India, Japan, and New Zealand. But the stubborn streak, sportive as it was, provided the courage to undertake such an outlandish challenge in the first place—to play the "upstart crow" by publishing a journal that would be judged according to the high standards of *The Shakespeare Quarterly*, *Shakespeare Survey*, and *Shakespeare Studies*. And the journal would be published in Union City and Martin, Tennessee, not at the Folger Library or at Cambridge.

Actually, through most of its brief history, Bill published as well as edited *The Upstart Crow*. Over the years he raised fifteen thousand dollars for the journal by re-mortgaging his house. Bill's economic contribution to the *Crow* was all the more significant because of the astronomical medical expenses incurred during the last four years of his life. He was hospitalized again and again for a serious back injury, an automobile accident, and the series of heart attacks, strokes, and coronary operations that eventually took his life. He managed these medical payments and supported the journal on the typical professor's salary—supplemented, of course, by the generous assistance of his

wife, Geraldine.

Through no fault of his own, the circumstances of Bill Bennett's life were never conducive to academic preference and advancement. He was a brilliant student: As valedictorian of his high school graduating class, he was awarded a scholarship to Millsaps College to prepare for a career in medicine. This lifelong ambition was to lead finally to the establishment of a course in Latin medical terminology at the university. The death of his father put him to work to help support his mother and younger brothers and sister. After years as a salesman and a printer, trades he put to good use while he published the *Crow*, Bill finally began his trek through the B.A. and M.A. programs at Memphis State University, emerging ready to teach at forty years of age. Health problems cut short his graduate career at Vanderbilt, where Bill hoped to complete a dissertation on Shakespeare.

The respect accorded to Bill by contributors, subscribers, and the thousands of Shakespeare lovers served by the magazine was enormous, and he relished every moment of it. The journal will continue, of course, but will never again enjoy the stately presence and promotional grace of its founder. Those of us who saw him in action at meetings of the Shakespeare Association or the Tennessee Philological Association will never forget Bill rising to his full six and a quarter feet to say a few words about the magazine, silver hair swept back, in his dark brown suit with his ebony cane at his side.

If he were here to see or celebrate his journal now, he probably would say that *The Upstart Crow* is in its sixth year of existence. Each volume has been issued in roughly one thousand copies and sent out all over the world to libraries, universities, and individuals. We have subscribers in India, France, England, and throughout the United States and Canada. Submissions number around one hundred a year, about fifteen of which can be printed, given the present length of the publication. Notes, production and film reviews, and full-scale articles have appeared in past issues as have occasional poems with a Shakespearean flavor and some original art work. The board of editors has been extended beyond its original nucleus of UTM faculty to include members from the university systems of California, Kentucky, and, of course, the University of Tennessee. We now have associate editors in Canada, at the University of Winnipeg and at Stratford-upon-Avon; so we have, I suppose, worked back to the source. To date we have published many of the finest Shakespeareans, established scholars such as Roy Battenhouse, H.R. Coursen, Paul Ramsey, Larry Champion, Marjorie Garber, Robert Lordi, Edith Kern, and Charles Forker right alongside younger faculty and even an occasional graduate student.

The third issue is prefaced by two short epigraphs which sum up the once and future philosophy of this "upstart" journal:

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

Aside from a few notes, editing *The Upstart Crow* represented most of Bill's scholarly effort during a brief teaching career. The associate editors had almost prevailed upon him to include one of his essays in the present volume. In his absence we have decided to publish two characteristically terse essays, both expressive of Bill's interests and indomitable sense of humor: a study of Iago as the Kierkegaardian aesthete and a trenchant piece on the gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet*.

This volume, then, is a miscellany of essays already selected for publication by Bill before his death and essays solicited by the editor and his associates to honor the memory of this courageous, inspiring man. The articles follow two beautiful elegaic poems graciously supplied by Paul Ramsey, Bill's long-time friend and associate editor, and a striking portrait of Bill by his neighbor and colleague at UTM, Thel Taylor. I only hope the memorial volume measures up to Bill's rigorous editorial standards. He always tore apart his most recent issue as it emerged from the press, red pencilling errors and excoriating himself for having allowed the slightest stylistic infelicity to pass into the permanence of print. I pray he has minimal occasion to cringe at the present volume which must stand as a testimonial to his dear but demanding memory.

Note

¹Special thanks to Svend Nielson for transcribing and translating the Old Welsh proverb of the title and to Martha Battle, Walter Haden, and Frank Windham for their careful editing and corrections of an early draft of the memoir. I should also take this occasion to thank Geraldine Bennett for her many years of service to and sacrifice for *The Upstart Crow*. The journal would never have existed without her encouragement and assistance. It would not have been continued without her approval and advice. And finally, I want to acknowledge the secretarial assistance received from Jan Wainscott and Marie Chester.

Two Birds with One Stone: Lapidary Re-Inscription in *The Phoenix and Turtle*

by Marjorie Garber

"What is *lapis*, William?"

—The Merry Wives of Windsor

In the introduction to an anthology of his favorite poems, *Parnassus*, published in 1874, Ralph Waldo Emerson identified *The Phoenix and Turtle* as that esthetic enigma, a poet's poem: "I consider this piece," he wrote, "a good example of the rule, that there is a poetry for bards proper, as well as a poetry for the world of readers. This poem, if published for the first time, and without a known author's name, would find no general reception. Only the poets would save it."¹ Emerson's admiration of and curiosity about Shakespeare's poem is unquestionably genuine; but while there is much truth in his comment, there is also, perhaps, an undertone of complacency. The poem is celebrated because it is difficult, a text to be decoded only by initiates—"only the poets [of whom I am one] would save it." One hundred years later the *Phoenix* riddle, like that of the Sphinx, is all too often still answered in terms as gnomic and "metaphysical" as the poem itself.

Perhaps because of this self-privileging critical tendency, which obscures while purporting to clarify, certain basic elements in the poem have not received the attention they deserve. If we attempt to re-contextualize it, to place it back in the context of Renaissance non-dramatic verse, we can see almost at once that its genre has much in common with two forms highly favored by the English Renaissance. Shakespeare's single and singular lyric poem is, in fact, a witty juxtaposition of two favorite genres derived from the classics: the funerary inscription or elegy, and the epithalamion. The peculiar mythological requirements set by Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr* volume, for which the poem was written, make such a typically Shakespearean *tour de force* possible, since the marriage of the phoenix is in this case literally, as well as in the usual sexual innuendo of the period, its "death." *Love's Martyr*, appearing in 1601, seems to have provided the opportunity for an idealized reworking of the cynical oxymorons of Claudius on the occasion of a very different nuptial: "With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage, / In equal scale weighing delight and dole" (*Ham.* I. ii. 12-13). In a similar way, the poem's curious diction—most opaque when least intellectually complex, sparsely ratiocinative when propounding mysteries—underscores the paradox asserted by the union of inscription and wedding song; and the deceptively ordered structure, invocation-threnos-anthem, offers a limited terrestrial

solution, that of Reason, but leads finally to the partially concealed "prayer" to be offered by the reader—an opening out of the poem into infinite time and space which is again characteristic of both Jonsonian elegy ("Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry") and Shakespearean dramatic epitaph ("in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain / To tell my story" (*Ham.* V. ii. 350-51)).² In such cases, the poem itself becomes iconic, a tangible refutation of time and death, and continuity is sought in an act of literary re-creation which links reader and poet; the reading of the poem revives the spirit of the dead child, the playing of the play recreates the meaning of Hamlet's life and death. If we examine *The Phoenix and Turtle* within this framework of Renaissance literary self-consciousness, we will, I think, find it a poem not only for "bards proper," but for the "world of readers."

We might begin with three assumptions which seem basic to the progress of the poem. The first is that as a literary structure it is continually undermining its own authority—that is, that it employs systems of thought and organization which, by use of their own methods, it proves false. Thus, for example, the poem, particularly the anthem section, is a vivid refutation of scholastic logic. By the very use of logical and quasi-logical forms, it demonstrates that Reason's basic tools are useless when they attempt to explain and appreciate the radical mysteries of love and death. The second introductory point is one of literary iconography: the recognition that the phoenix, for all its broad associations, is above all the symbol of temporal and atemporal worlds come together. The "intersection of the timeless with time" has been an area of deep concern to poets through and past Eliot, but to the Renaissance mind it had a particular interest. It is the subject of the *Mutability Cantos*; it provokes the *Fowre Hymnes*, and it appears prominently in Shakespeare's last plays, though it is present in all of them. In the very selection of the phoenix as central symbol, the poet made clear his intention to grapple with this essential Platonic paradox.

Finally we should bear in mind in reading the poem the fact that it is directly, and at the same time subversively, about the condition of poetry. Walter Ong, in an interesting article, argues that the phoenix and turtle expressed the binary condition of metaphor and its insistent attempt to fuse two terms into one. At its culmination, he observes, the theme of the poem "converts into a metaphor of metaphor itself."³ There can be no doubt that the poem is crucially concerned with the operation of language, and particularly with the function of paradox; metaphor, clearly, is fundamental to paradox in operation. A broader but no less interesting relation to poetry is provided by the presence of the poem's "threnos" and its related form, the inscription. This connection is made more persuasive by the presence of the "urn" in the last stanzas, and the implicit suggestion that the entire trimeter section is lapidary in intent.

Formally the poem divides into three sections, of which the first two are composed in tetrameter quatrains and the third in trimeter tercets. The first section is an invocation in the hortatory mood, summoning members of the bird kingdom to attend at the funeral of the phoenix and turtle. The language is ceremonial, largely Romance-Latinate and periphrastic: formulas like "the bird of loudest lay," "thou shrieking harbinger," and "the priest in surplice white" are at considerable variance from the apparent "simplicity" of logical diction in the anthem section.

The identity of the speaker is unspecified; the reader hears and responds to his call to mourning as a part of the bereaved world of nature, allying himself with the elegiac tone. For plainly a company of mourners is being gathered, and only sympathetic presences are desired. Thus, the "bird of loudest lay," designated as "herald" and "trumpet," is the first bidden to the obsequies. There has been much critical debate about the identification of this bird; some readers have speculated that it is a new phoenix, perched on the Arabian tree, following Herodotus' injunction that the first duty of the young bird is to preside at the funeral of its parent. Others, like Fairchild and Feuillerat, have suggested the crane, mentioned by Chaucer in the *Parliament of Fowls* for his "trompes soun." Yet the diction suggests that no particular species need be indicated. The "bird of loudest lay" is he whose voice is most easily heard, a mourner chosen by his attributes for the role of herald. And the "Arabian tree" upon which he sits, the phoenix' accustomed nest, is "sole" not only because it is unique—one phoenix, one perch—but also because it is suddenly alone, bereaved of its proper inmate.⁴ By selecting the tree as the locus for the call to mourning, the speaker thus underlines the pathos of the moment; the Arabian tree becomes a sacred place, the birds now votaries of the vanished pair.

The next two stanzas are occupied in keeping malevolent guests away. Again the birds are described in very indirect terms, yet the "shrieking harbinger" is readily identifiable as the owl, traditionally (as in the *Parliament of Fowls* and in *Macbeth* II. ii. 4) an augurer of death. That the owl, who announces death, should be forbidden from the funeral rites of the phoenix, which does not die, makes good sense. What these invocation stanzas are doing, then, is to make a list of the phoenix' and turtle's characteristics, at the same time that they describe the company. By inference, the phoenix and turtle are characterized as chaste (stanza 1) and immortal (stanza 2). Stanza 3 will add the character of royalty, stanza 4 that of foreknowledge of death, and stanza 5 those of longevity and chastity once again.

The interdiction of fowls of "tyrant wing" has ample precedent in Shakespeare's sources. In any case these birds would be antithetical to the nature of the phoenix-and-turtle bond, since they destroy life and do not dote

but feed upon one another. The eagle, like the phoenix, is traditionally associated with royalty, and the precedent of the Eagle-Dove pair makes his presence even more appropriate. Again we may notice the ceremonial diction in the choice of "obsequy" for "funeral" or "rite." "Obsequy" also connotes compliance, and thus adds to the ritual sense which the invocation has been developing. This formulaic tone, assisted by the periphrasis, is steadily developed throughout the whole of the first five stanzas. It finds a complement in the verse form employed, for the lag occasioned by the rhyming first and fourth lines permits some intricacy of construction: this is particularly apparent in the structure of the second and fifth stanzas, where the periphrastic noun and its appositives occupy the first three lines, and are closed off by the imperative verb in the fourth.

The presence of the swan as priest at the funeral rite is appropriate to this developing tone. The "*defunctive* music" which T.S. Eliot was to pick up in "Burbank with a Baedeker" is a curious form, which is reinforced in oddity by the archaizing "can," meaning "to have knowledge of." The fact that the swan is "death-divining" links it to the ancient idea that the phoenix exemplifies animal instinct, in foreknowing the date and place of its death. The swan thus echoes yet another aspect of the phoenix character. It is interesting that the swan is here to sing at someone else's funeral. His song is traditionally reserved for his own death, so that we are here given a renewed sense of the intimacy with which the bird kingdom participates in the life of phoenix and turtle. As the phoenix partakes of the defining qualities of all the funeral guests, so it seems to encompass them. The resultant Platonic unity bears directly upon the larger question of the phoenix' unique position at the crossroads of time and timelessness.

The last guest bidden to the rites is a further reinforcement of all that has been inferred. The crow's storied longevity, again presented in periphrastic and ceremonious language ("thou treble-dated crow") is once more an image in little of the more fabulous immortality of the phoenix. Its supposed mating habits are attested to by Swan's *Speculum Mundi* (1635, p. 397): the crow, we read, is conceived not "by conjunction of male and female," but by "a kind of billing at the mouth." In the technical sense it was thus "chaste," though not as absolutely pure as the nonpareil phoenix. We may note that this mating, like all the other significant gestures used in the invocation to define character (the "sound" of the "bird of loudest lay," the "shrieking" owl, the swan, "that defunctive music can") is an act which requires utterance, or at least a giving and taking of breath. While these gestures are entirely appropriate to the act of mourning or to the attribute being described, they are at the same time tropically related to poetry. In a sense each bird is a kind of poet, and they mourn, not merely as all nature mourns in an elegy, but instead through the act of verse. This self-conscious tendency, the drawing of

attention to poems within the poem, will grow more evident as *The Phoenix and Turtle* proceeds.

As the invocation has developed, the elliptical heights of "shrieking harbinger" and "bird of loudest lay" have been replaced by a more straightforward identification of subject. The stanza on the swan does not mention that bird by name until two more indirect pieces of information have been introduced, but the fifth stanza introduces the crow forthrightly in the first line. This abatement of indirection is the sign of a progressive lowering of style; although the entire invocation is written in a much higher style than the remainder of the poem, language is becoming gradually simpler. The elevation of diction has also had a distancing effect, further heightened by the absence of personal pronouns, and this too is beginning to break down in the fifth stanza. With the final line,

'Mongst our mourners shalt thou go,

the speaker is identified in sympathy with the group of mourners, and the role of "mourners" itself is for the first time made explicit. The unravelling of this first "false" or merely verbal mystery, complicated still further by the smaller mysteries of bird identification, concludes the invocation and leads directly to the anthem.

The commencement of the anthem takes place within the plot-frame of the invocation, as Reason's threnos will later be contained in the anthem; thus, the sections are nested like Chinese boxes inside one another, reinforcing the sense of artifact. The word "anthem," though in one sense merely a general term for "song," is at the same time related to "antiphon" and may be defined as a hymn sung responsively. An antiphonal nature can readily be detected in the structure of the anthem stanzas here, for each contains a twinned set of propositions, putting forth the same or related propositions in the forms of paradox or conundrum:

Hearts remote, yet not asunder;
Distance, and no space was seen.

The presence of these twinned sentiments, which do not so much advance the sense as pretend to do so, undercuts the appearance of strict logic produced by economy of language and syntax. The diction is in direct contrast to that of the preceding section: where the invocation contained relatively simple statements made complicated by ellipsis and Romance-Latinate language, the anthem is composed of puzzling and contradictory statements couched in misleadingly simple terms. Here, most strongly, the undermining of Reason through the use of her own tools is taking place. Scholastic terms more usually applied to the Trinity are applied to the perfect love of the phoenix and the

turtle, with a result at once comic (because mock-heroic) and expressive. In effect the befuddlement of Reason in these stanzas is a triumph of imitative form.

The effect of the paradoxes in the anthem section does not develop from their originality; "Distance and no space was seen," for example, was a Renaissance favorite, appearing notably in Marvell;⁵ "That the self was not the same" is one of many striking echoes of a poem by the third century Latin philosopher Lactantius, *De Ave Phoenix*, which seem to establish it as a likely source for Shakespeare's own phoenix poem.⁶ Rather, what makes these paradoxes particularly effective is their sheer number and the unrelieved way in which they follow one another in sequence. The phoenix and the turtle, it develops, are not so much examples of these remarkably contradictory conditions, as types of them. For this reason the paradoxical commonplaces become startlingly uncommonplace; the poet, we realize, is not talking in metaphor, but rather with a brilliantly assured literalness. When he writes that

Love and constancy is dead

the force of the singular verb is sharply and suddenly felt.

The extreme condensation of language gives rise to a few problems of interpretation which must be resolved in the direction of intended ambiguity. Thus the pun in

Either was the other's mine

implies both that "each was a treasure to the other" (cf. the turtle's "right/Flaming in the phoenix' sight") and, more interestingly, that each could possessively call the other "mine." This is the same paradox presented in a hidden way: if each is "mine" to the other, how can we distinguish between the possessed and the possessor? Effectively, the whole sense of the possessive is eliminated. This figure is even more interesting because it presents "mine" in its primary meaning of possessive adjective labelled as such; "mine" is made into a substantive, which it is not. Such a reflexive treatment of syntax as part of the poem's surface of literary self-consciousness is frequently encountered in twentieth century poetry, for example, in Robert Graves' poem, "Leaving The Rest Unsaid", which ends

So now, my solemn ones, leaving the rest unsaid,
Rising in air as on a gander's wing
At a careless comma,

As with the word "mine" in *The Phoenix and Turtle*, the comma, normally only a linguistic tool, here usurps syntactical meaning and calls dual

attention to itself. The *Phoenix*'s assertion that "Either was the other's mine" is thus a further contributory factor toward the breakdown of logic and ordinary "reason."

The treatment accorded the word "Property" is similarly multiple. Since "Property" is followed in the next stanza by a personified Reason, it is sensible to equate it with the allegorical representation of the power of ownership. Thus, after the play on "mine," the entire concept of possession is brought in question. At the same time "property" has an Aristotelian connotation, familiar today in scientific language, and in Shakespeare's day connected with the scholastic philosophers: in this sense it connotes "that which distinguishes one thing or class from another." Not only grammar (property-possession) but also matter itself is here denied. The extraordinary love of the pair, we are given to understand, has made chaos of all the rational systems through which man had previously approached his world.

The third possible meaning of "property" reinforces both of the others; it connects the term with its etymological ancestor, OF *propriete*, and thus associates it with "property," which shares the same root and history. Here "property" connotes rules of decorum, particularly, perhaps, rules of language. The behavior of the pair is not fitting to the circumstance, which is that they are separate entities. It is *inappropriate*. And language must concede that it has no *proper* terms in which to explain their relationship.

The failure of language to compass this circumstance is made more apparent by the poet's insistent use of numerical terms. Numbers should be the most explicit, as they are the least adorned, of words. But a statement like

Single nature's double name
Neither two nor one was called

effectively demonstrates that there are some conditions for which the very concept of number is useless. This is certainly the predicament into which Reason has fallen. When it finds itself confused and refuted by the spectacle of phoenix-and-turtle, it cries:

How true a twain
Seemeth this concordant one!

After all the paradoxical statements which have gone before, this observation sounds perfectly consonant with the whole. Yet there could be no clearer evidence that Reason is confounded. For grammatically, logically, *reasonably*, it should have said

How true a one
Seemeth this concordant twain!

The concept of a "concordant one" is pleonastic, unless we read it, "this one (concordant of two)." Reason's actual statement means something like "How true (ie., faithful) a pair of lovers this concordant pair seems!", something it is perhaps superfluous to observe at this point. But the statement reversed would mean "How truly (ie., completely) these two, who are concordant, appear to be one!" Both statements are, of course, implicit. But at the same time it seems evident that we are to perceive Reason as visibly confused.

I have stressed this point so strongly because it seems to me that an understanding of the persona of Reason is fundamental to a reading of the third section, the threnos. The assertion that

Love hath reason, Reason none

is the keynote to comprehension. Reason is the "chorus" to the tragic scene of phoenix and dove fled in mutual flame; it must thus supply the *moralisé* section, the section which tells listeners how to apply the tragedy to their own lives. Yet to call the scene "tragic" at all is to impose an external judgment: mutual immolation for love (if one is a phoenix or turtle) is not a good idea. Since this would seem to be denied by everything we know about the phoenix and the turtle, the tragedy must be for those who are left behind. It is tragic because we no longer have perfection among us, and because, were we to do the same, our plight would be tragic indeed. For the phoenix and the turtle, however, it is not an act to which any value judgment is appropriate. It is a custom of phoenixes, though not of others, to immolate themselves, as part of the process of rejuvenation. Reason's threnos, thus, is really the expression of ideas held by the choric figure of Reason itself. This is substantiated by the diction, as well as the form of its statements. Therefore, despite the confident epigrammatic tones of the trimeter tercets, it is important to consider carefully the statements in the threnos, in order to judge whether distinction is being made between Reason's views and those of the poet.

The change in level of diction from the invocation to the threnos is one of startling degree. The poet begins by describing, in a highly ornate and elliptical way, such ornithological specimens as the "death-divining swan" and the "treble-dated crow." The first line of the poem introduces the "bird of loudest lay." Yet by the last line the phoenix and turtle, who surely outshine all the mourners in brilliance, are reduced merely to "dead birds."

The fact that they are considered dead accounts in part for this *reductio*: while living they were as distinctive as the birds of the invocation, but death has robbed them of all but the barest definition. After the hyperbole of the anthem, however, the severity of the reduction catches us by surprise. So, too, does the allegorizing tendency of the language. The turtle becomes a

capitalized Truth, and the phoenix a capitalized Beauty, while the whole of their relationship is characterized as

Beauty, truth, and rarity,
Grace in all simplicity,

at the same time that we are forcibly reminded of the "cinders" which alone remain. While in some senses a fair assessment of the "meaning" of phoenix and turtle, this is nonetheless a severely limited vision. The same can be said of the poem's most moralizing stanza, which asserts the Platonic truth that all things are but shadows of an unattainable absolute (here embodied in the vanished phoenix and turtle):

Truth may seem, but cannot be;
Beauty brag, but 'tis not she;
Truth and Beauty buried be.

This is very much the sort of thinking we should expect from the character of Reason. Reason examines the details of a past experience and draws a useful conclusion, but a conclusion which somehow stands apart from the main force of the experience itself. Its kinship to the reassuring homily of the gravestone inscription is marked.

That the threnos itself is patterned on the funerary inscription can hardly be doubted. The mention of "cinders" in the first stanza and the explicit presence of the "urn" in the last reinforce those conditions of style which point toward inscriptive moralizing. We have in addition the fact of the frequency with which phoenixes did actually appear on funeral urns. The presence of this concrete art object, the urn, at the close of a poem so highly conscious of its own shape and poetic identity, is a kind of concretion of artifice, the summing up of all poetic and aesthetic implications into a single appropriate symbol, much like the weeping statue of "The Nymph Complaining." Cleanth Brooks usefully compares this urn with Donne's well-wrought one⁷, and the figure of the urn, grave, or tomb as a trope for the poem itself is one of the most common and characteristic conceits of Jonsonian poetry.⁸ What remains in doubt, however, is the degree to which Reason's reasoning in the threnos does in fact reflect a summing up of what has gone before.

The speaker of the threnos has an epigrammatic tendency which we have already noted. He also has a penchant for definition, and primarily for definition of a reductive kind. The most interesting example of this is the famous "puzzler" stanza in which phoenix and turtle are pictured as having passed irrevocably from life,

Leaving no posterity.

Things become even more puzzling when the speaker attempts to explain this lack of posterity. He emphasizes that

'Twas not their infirmity,
It was married chastity.

Even to assume that the absence of progeny demands a physiological explanation is curious. By "infirmity" presumably is meant either impotence or sterility, while "married chastity" has been taken by critics to mean anything from abstinence to marital love without lust. So peculiar is this problem that M.C. Bradbrook once attempted to explain it by pointing out that the union of a phoenix and a turtle would be biologically sterile. But it seems unnecessary to go to such lengths. "Married chastity" is most probably an earthly love which places highest value on spiritual commerce, like that celebrated in a poem which has much in common with *The Phoenix and Turtle*—Lord Herbert of Cherbury's "Ode upon a Question Moved, Whether Love Should Continue for Ever?"⁹ But in any case it is a deliberately oxymoronic term which seems to be the crowning paradox in a poem of paradoxes. For the reason for its presence, and the explanation of its puzzling import, it may be helpful to go back once more to the question of persona.

The lines on "infirmity" and "married chastity" are Reason's explanation; they therefore lack omniscient authority. Compared to the poet-speaker who gives directions, invitations and descriptions, its credibility is circumscribed. The very syntactical form of the threnos section sets it off from the other two, in that its mood is copulative. Reason is defining things, sorting things out. And in its eagerness to do so, it speaks more to the terrestrial than to the celestial or poetic understanding. "No posterity," because there is no progeny in the normal sense. "Married chastity," because how else would the poet explain this fact.

In the text of *Love's Martyr* Robert Chester speaks of "another Princely Phoenix"; Donne, in his Valentine's Day epithalamion "On the Lady Elizabeth," King James' eldest daughter, hints at the procreation of "Young Phoenixes." In each case, though, the poet is manifestly aware that he is contradicting the essential fact of the phoenix legend—the uniqueness of the "sole Arabian bird"; this is, of course, the point of Donne's witty coinage.¹⁰ The fact of the phoenix's unique death and self-renewal (in some versions, death and new birth) is what makes it stand for the junction of temporal and atemporal, and thus what makes it so interesting to the Renaissance mind. The phoenix and the turtle left "no posterity" precisely because it is in the nature of phoenixes not to do so. Reason's investigatory mind, seeking the rational in all things, is what prompts the need for a further answer. And this imperfect understanding on Reason's part is yet another undermining of system, yet another proof that it is "in itself confounded."

If we are willing to accept the evidence for a speaking persona of Reason as distinct from the authorial voice, we will find it much easier to coordinate the tone and data of the threnos with that of the rest of the poem. The bare, stripped "dead birds" at the close are another of these analytic reductions: true as far as they go, but not going far enough. The birds are dead, after all, only in a temporal and not in an atemporal sense; the phoenix itself seems to have been reborn (indeed, this is its definitional quality) and in any case the poem enshrines them in a perpetual being.¹¹ Likewise the "Truth and Beauty" lines which immediately follow the speculations on "married chastity" are inadequate to the poem's magnitude. A mind which sees the phoenix and the turtle described through invocation and anthem as merely a primer lesson on absolutes is distinctly circumscribed by its own limited purview. To put it another way, the tone of the threnos is a "pat" tone; what it presents as unmodified declarative statement is in fact only partial truth.

Repeated references to the "urn" and its explicit symbolism have made the third section of the poem at least as reflexively "self-conscious" as the previous two. The birds of the invocation were described in images of utterance; the center of the poem is called an "anthem" and we are told that it contains a "threnos"; the temporal-atemporal ambiguity of the phoenix' existence, so closely related to the mortality-immortality question, is a metaphor for the very condition of poetry itself, as the twoness-oneness figure is a metaphor of metaphor. Through the very last line, the poem retains this focus: the final instruction of the threnos returns to the hortatory mood, and bids us

For these dead birds sigh a prayer.

The implication is that a prayer on the part of the reader should follow the concluded threnos, perpetuating the Chinese box structure and making the progression invocation-anthem-threnos-prayer. In a sense, then, the expectation is infinite, a formal counterpart to the image of the immortal phoenix. At the same time that the movement is transcendent, however, it is also circular; the invocation to prayer brings us back to the poem's own beginning. And this too is consonant with the whole phoenix-figure, which renews itself in the first line with the "bird of loudest lay." The poem itself is a highly self-conscious formal structure. Like the nuances of diction and the extended use of commonplace metaphysical paradox, it repeats the patterns set forth in the "plot." The poem is made up of smaller poems and finds its resolution in the paradoxical permanence of flux, much in the manner of the Garden of Adonis and the *Mutability Cantos*.

This formal paradox returns us to the crucial question of genre with which we began, for the curious poetic form and equally curious diction of the

poem are deliberately managed so as to mirror Shakespeare's witty, yet highly serious, elision of elegy and epithalamion. We noted above some of the contemporary inscription poems, 'by Jonson and others, to which *The Phoenix and Turtle* has significant parallels; these brief epitaphic verses have their origin, of course, in the Greek Anthology, much admired and imitated throughout the period. Another classical antecedent of interest, and one of equal significance for the period, is Ovid's *Amores*, specifically the description of a parrot's funeral in *Amores* II, vi. In this case the poem, like Shakespeare's, begins with a call to convocation spoken by the poet-elegist, and closes with a description of the parrot's tomb and its inscription which is explicitly lapidary, where Reason's is implicitly so. The parrot is celebrated for his ability to imitate human speech, and thus is a poet-figure; the "affable turtledove" (10) is described as his constant and devoted lover. Ovid's bird funeral, does not, however, contain any hint of paradox or playfulness, nor does it dwell for long upon the phoenix, the central figure of Shakespeare's poetic metamorphosis. In *The Phoenix and Turtle* Shakespeare, by dwelling on the phoenix' peculiar attributes, is able to transmute the metaphorical statement of classical elegy, including Ovid's, to literal fact: the mourned one is not dead but lives, the phoenix literally renews itself. Reason's short-sighted denial of this fact underscores the poet's witty inversion of elegiac form: most elegiac subjects are translated, like Lycidas, to the heavens; Reason, the pseudo-elegist of phoenix and turtle, reduces the immortal phoenix to a "dead bird," setting the stage for the reader's own "prayer," which is in fact a recognition of the immortal quality of both the birds and the poem which enshrines them.

As he did with the elegy, so in his metamorphosis of the epithalamion, Shakespeare draws upon poetic predecessors, perhaps most notably *The Parliament of Fowls*, which, like Donne's marriage song for the Lady Elizabeth, is a St. Valentine's Day poem. The *Parliament* presents an assemblage of ranked and ordered birds, including a constant turtle, and also makes reference to the semi-allegorized figure of Reason, cited by Nature as an ordering principle of terrestrial marriage. As in Shakespeare's poem, the meaning of marriage and the power of love are interpreted in widely differing ways, depending upon the perceiver. The epithalamic content of *The Phoenix and Turtle* is as evident as its elegiac elements: the transcendent love of the wedded pair is celebrated; as in Chaucer, the pair are birds; also as in Chaucer, their happiness, which is greater and more permanent than the rational mind can conceive, is celebrated in song. The poet's departure from the formal tradition is equally evident; for although much of the sentiment is nuptial in tone, or at least is commonly found in poems of marriage celebration, the actual event is funeral. Again it is the phoenix figure which holds the two together: Marriage in this poem *is* funeral, as funeral *is*

marriage.

This is Shakespeare's triumph over the well-worn subject matter imposed upon him by Chester's *Love's Martyr*. He seizes in the obligatory figure of the phoenix an opportunity to fuse two genres usually considered opposite in every way. In the process he comments upon traditional systems of logic and grammar, only to undermine them; he examines the technique of metaphysical paradox and transcends it at the same time that he employs it; in the process he comments succinctly and trenchantly upon two significant traditions of Renaissance lyric poetry. In fact it would be difficult to find a more Shakespearean approach to the writing of the lyric: from the inventor—and amused observer—of the "historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible or poem unlimited," it is a use of source, genre, and tradition most appropriate to his art.

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Notes

¹*Parnassus*, ed. R.W. Emerson (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1874), v-vi.

²Cf. also the invitations to retell the tale in a number of the other plays, and notably the tragedies: e.g., *Othello*, V. ii. 339-40: "pray you in your letters, / When you shall these unlucky deeds relate. . ."; *Antony and Cleopatra*, V. ii. 358-62: "No grave upon the earth shall clip in it / A pair so famous. High events as these / Strike those that make them; and their story is / No less in pity, than his glory which / Brought them to be lamented." This function of retelling, and its importance for the reflexive nature of final scenes in Shakespeare, is more fully discussed in my *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 86-87, 107-108, 156, 157, 187-90.

³"Metaphor and the Twinned Vision," *Sewanee Review*, 63 (1955), p. 200.

⁴I am indebted to Professor Frederick Pottle for this suggestion.

⁵The paradox of two-in-one is variously treated in Marvell. In "The Definition of Love" it appears as

the Love which us doth bind
But Fate so enviously debars,
Is the conjunction of the Mind,
And opposition of the stars.
29-32

while in the "Horatian Ode" it draws its analogue from the laws of physics:

Nature, that hateth emptiness,
Allows of penetration less.
41-42

⁶Cf. in this instance Lactantius' "*ipse quidem, sed non eadem est*" (169). *De Ave Phoenixe*, though it owes much to the pagan authors, contains at the same time strong elements of Christian symbolism, and this twinned content accounts in part for the poet's use of paradoxical language. In some passages words double back upon themselves with a virtuoso facility very like that of "The Phoenix and Turtle," e.g.,

ipsa sibi proles, suus est pater et suus heres,
 nutrix ipsa sui, semper alumna sibi.
 ipsa quidem, sed non eadem est, eademque nec ipsa est
 aeternam vitam mortis adepta bono.
 167-170

(She is her own progeny, her own sire, and her
 own heir. She is her own nurse, ever foster
 child to herself. She is indeed herself, yet
 not the same; the same and not herself, having
 attained life everlasting through death's boon.)
 (trans. Mary Cletus Fitzpatrick,
Lactanti De Ave Phoenixe. [Phila., 1933])

Details of plot, as well as language, seem to link *De Ave Phoenixe* and *The Phoenix and Turtle*. The "sole Arabian tree" appears as "arboris altae / vertice, quae totum despicit una nemos" (39-40). Less conventionally associated with the phoenix is the power of song implied in "loudest lay." Lactantius' bird, having attained her perch,

incipit illa sacri modulamina fundere cantus
 et mira lucem voce ciere novam,
 quam nec aedoniae voces nec tibia possit
 musica Cirrhaeis adsimulare modis,
 sed neque olor moriens imitari posse putetur
 nec Cylleneae fila canora lyrae.
 45-50

(begins to pour forth the notes of a holy chant and to summon the
 new day in a wondrous melody, which neither the voice of the
 nightingale nor the tuneful pipe with its Cirrhaean measures can
 match. But neither can the dying swan be deemed a rival, nor the
 melodious strings of the Cyllenean lyre.)

The conjunction with the "olor moriens" is suggestive, and the account is one of the few which describes the voice of the phoenix at all. Shakespeare's phoenix is likewise recognizable in Lactantius' discussion of sex: "felix, quae Veneris foedera nulla collit" (164)—an easy anticipation of "married chastity." And the occasion of her death is once again marked by an artifact and its inscription:

protinus exculpunt sacrato in marmore formam
 et titulo signant remque diemque novo
 153-4

(at once they carve her form on hallowed marble,
 and mark both day and event with a new title).

Above all, however, it is the paradoxical tone, the praise of the bird who "perit, ut vivat", that makes *De Ave Phoenixe* a likely antecedent of Shakespeare's poem.

⁷"The Language of Paradox," *The Well Wrought Urn* (New York: 1947), p. 19.

⁸E.g., chosen almost at random, *urn*, Herrick, "The Amber Bead"; *grave*, Jonson, "On My First Daughter"; *tomb*, Herrick, "The Funeral Rites of the Rose."

⁹Lord Herbert's "Ode" is written in the same stanza form as the first two sections of the *Phoenix*: tetrameter quatrains with a rhyme scheme of *abba*, the so-called "In Memoriam" stanza. The lovers in the "Ode", in their discussion of the possibility of love surviving physical death, come very close to the Shakespearean paradox, that two, when the two are lovers, can be more of a unity than one:

So when one wing can make no way,
 Two joined can themselves dilate,
 So can two persons propagate,
 When singly either would decay.
 125-28

Thus, in a phrase very like Shakespeare's "Either was the other's mine,"

As one another's mystery,
 Each shall be both, yet both be one
 131-32

and "mystery" is exalted above reason. Lord Herbert's poem throughout demonstrates a verbal consciousness very like that of the *Phoenix*, using grammar and syntax as metaphors to support the philosophical content of the verse.

¹⁰ Two Phoenixes, whose joined breasts,
 Are unto one another mutual nests,
 Where motion kindles such fires as shall give
 Young Phoenixes, and yet the old shall live.
 23-26

And by this act of these two Phoenixes
 Nature again restored is,
 For since these two are two no more,
 There's but one Phoenix still, as was before.
 99-102

Here again is the two-in-one paradox presented as a mystery solved by love.

¹¹"The Phoenix and Turtle," *SQ*, 6 (1955), p. 357.

The Idea of Time in Shakespeare's Second Historical Tetralogy

by Charles R. Forker

For the Methode of a Poet historical is not such, as of an Historiographer. For an Historiographer discourseth of affayres orderly as they were donne, accounting as well the times as the actions, but a Poet thrusteth into the middest, euen where it most concerneth him, and there recouring to the thinges forepaste, and diuining of thinges to come, maketh a pleasing Analysis of all.

—Edmund Spenser's letter to Sir Walter Raleigh,
prefixed to *The Faerie Queene*

I

That eight of the ten Shakespearean histories are arranged into tetralogies—two sequences of four plays each—suggests an important point about the form of the history play as opposed to the form of the other major genres, comedy and tragedy—namely, that the history play (almost by the nature of its subject) is an *open* as opposed to a *closed* form.¹ History is a continuum, and any historical drama must, in an important sense, commence *in medias res*. Of course, each of the four plays in the two tetralogies has its own organic structure and may be performed as a self-contained unit. But all these plays contain prominent references to what went before as well as predictions or foreshadowings of what is to come, so that an important part of our experience of a history play consists of being caught up dramatically in the stream of events as these impinge upon us immediately, while being constantly made aware that there are longer vistas of cause and effect that cannot be ignored.

Comedy is a self-contained and generally closed form because it creates its own fictional world tied to a completed narrative and a set of characters who exist only to fulfill the particular requirements of the fiction. When Orlando and Rosalind in *As You Like It* or Bassanio and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* join hands as married couples in the fifth act, the drama is over, and the world they have brought to life before us ceases to exist except as memory. These plays do not encourage us to imagine the young lovers twenty years later as the parents of children, growing thicker in the waist, losing their hair, or having problems with gout or lumbago. In another way, the same point may be made about tragedy. Elizabethan tragedies always end with death—the most absolute kind of closure that we know—and the devastation is usually such that we are forced to look backward over what was or what might have been rather than at what may follow. After Hamlet's death no one cares very much about a Denmark under Fortinbras's rule, and at

the end of *King Lear*, the future will scarcely bear thinking about at all. Edgar's final words sum up the typical mood at the end of tragedy:

The weight of this sad time we must obey,
 Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
 The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
 Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

(V. iii. 328-331)²

This is obviously not the way that *Richard II* or *2 Henry IV*, for instance, conclude. Bolingbroke in the first play is just beginning a reign that will be as important for England as the one that has just ended with Richard's assassination. We hear of the new king's concern for his "unthrifty son" (V. iii. 1), even though Prince Hal has not yet appeared as a stage character, so we know that Henry IV is already saddled with a family problem that remains very much unresolved. Moreover, Henry's political difficulties, far from being over, are just commencing. He hopes to make a voyage to the Holy Land to wash the bloody guilt of Richard's murder from his hands, but we already know from Aumerle's abortive revolt, if not from the Bishop of Carlisle's ominous prophecy in Act IV, that more or less continuous rebellion will keep him at home and never permit him to go on crusade. Hence the poignant irony of his dying two plays later in the Jerusalem chamber of his London palace. Also, the dying king advises his son to "busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (*2 Henry IV*, IV. v. 213-214), and, after the rejection of Falstaff, Prince Hal's brother, John of Lancaster, lays the foundation for the next play by anticipating the great triumph of Agincourt:

I will lay odds that, ere this year expire,
 We bear our civil swords and native fire
 As far as France. I heard a bird so sing,
 Whose music, to my thinking, pleas'd the King.
 (*2 Henry IV*, V. v. 106-109)

Shakespeare's histories have a more ambiguous sense of ending than the comedies and tragedies, not merely because in eight cases out of ten they are parts of a larger sequence but also because they deal, for the most part, with actual events that cannot be neatly separated from their origins and consequences—with events, by the way, that were near enough in the cultural memory of the Elizabethans to seem contiguous with the present. As Americans, we regard our own Civil War not only as an episode from the past but also as exerting a formative kind of pressure on our present culture. Shakespeare and his audience were interested in the political struggles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries because these turbulent times allowed them to make sense of their own national heritage. The older age was seen as

helping to shape their own age—even, in a way, as reflecting contemporary issues—and as having the potential, theoretically at least, to yield insight into what the future might be like.³ The form of the history play as Shakespeare develops and refines it becomes, then, the dramatic means by which we as an audience experience time. The duration of the play in the theatre—what Shakespeare referred to in *Romeo and Juliet* as “the two hours traffic of our stage” (*Prologue*, 12)—is an artistic convention that permits Shakespeare and (through his artistry) permits us to explore the endlessly fascinating phenomenon of time and temporality in a complex way.

Renaissance historiography regarded the purpose of history as being principally didactic. Shakespeare might have said (with Santayana and, later, Churchill) that those who cannot remember their past are condemned to repeat it. But Shakespeare and his age knew that the past was both different from and similar to the present and also that the future would in some mysterious way be a product of both present and past. They also knew, as we do, that today’s past was yesterday’s present and that today is tomorrow’s past. Also, of course, in a more puzzlingly philosophical or epistemological sense, they were aware, as we are, that one could only know either past or future through the mediation of the present. There is a kind of truth in saying that past and future exist only in the mind as it confronts these through the medium of imagination. In one sense all historians *create* the past—reconstruct it out of materials not wholly available to the age being represented. Everyone’s re-creation of the past and the meaning stamped upon it, moreover, will differ according to the historian’s particular angle of vision, or his cultural, religious, and moral biases. Shakespeare’s histories as a group raise these issues powerfully to our consciousness—but dramatically rather than discursively, concretely rather than abstractly—by clothing the intellectual paradoxes with human flesh and giving us not only a vivid sense of the past but also the essence or process of historical flow in both its universal and particular aspects. My purpose in this essay, keeping these generalizations in mind, is to illustrate a few of the ways in which the concept of time, which must underlie all historical inquiry, lends a special kind of richness and significance to *Richard II*, the two *Henry IV* plays, and *Henry V* considered as an unfolding progression.

II

Elizabethan England inherited two models of the shape of human history—one classical, the other medieval. The notion of historical movement that Shakespeare derived, indirectly, from Thucydides and, more particularly, from Polybius was cyclical. In this view, civilization had its happy and its unhappy periods, its fortunate and unfortunate phases, but recurrence was its defining feature. The ups and downs of one period could be expected

to replicate themselves in succeeding times, and (at least in Polybius's analysis) in more or less the same—or analogous—sequence. The past thus became the mirror of present and future ages, but, since all change obeyed an ineluctable rule of predictable but unending alteration, the sense of long-range direction, progress, or purpose in history could be only relative and contingent. Eternal flux was the irreducible law of nature, and a kind of saturnine determinism its final implication. Of necessity, the practical historian must focus his attention upon some particular segment of a movement that had no ultimate beginning or end but that nevertheless might disturb or reassure through the recurring impressions of *déjà vu* that it afforded.

Contrastingly, the medieval concept of history regarded all human events of whatever period as part of salvation history under the aegis of Christian revelation. St. Augustine, for instance, viewed time as a uniquely human condition and its wearisome pressure as a consequence of the Fall. Time had an identifiable beginning (the Creation as described in Genesis) and an identifiable end (the Last Judgment as foretold in the book of Revelation). It also enclosed two intermediate points of vast significance—the fall of man (through Adam's original sin) and the salvation of man (through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the second Adam). All human activity from the creation until the end of the world was thus seen theologically as an aspect of divine providence. Any historical period or pattern of change must then be interpreted as part of an overarching and eternal pattern in which time itself becomes a mere parenthesis (the phrase is Sir Thomas Browne's) between the nothingness out of which God made the world and the physical nothingness to which He will ultimately reconvert it. History in the medieval view becomes teleological, part of the pilgrimage of the soul through earthly changes and vicissitudes to its final destination, the City of God. Even if Shakespeare did not read the Church Fathers, he could have absorbed this latter view of time by attending the biblical plays of the late Middle Ages—the Corpus Christi pageant cycle that survived in certain provincial English towns into the period of the dramatist's boyhood. These plays, performed in sequence on wagons, began with a dramatization of the Creation and ended with the Final Judgment, orienting the most famous stories of the Old and New Testaments between these absolute termini to the central fact of Christ's death and resurrection.

Both of these historical perspectives appear in Shakespeare's tetralogy, superimposed—as it were—to create an interesting ambiguity or indeterminacy of response to the characters and events dramatized. Richard II's deposition and murder tended to be interpreted by Shakespeare's chronicle sources (particularly by Edward Hall and even here partly by implication) as analogous to the Fall, as a kind of original sin in its political

dimension. The unlawful removal of an anointed king by the illegitimate usurper Bolingbroke fundamentally disturbed the created universe as ordained by God, the inevitable consequence being perpetual unrest in the body politic, continuing rebellion, and a socio-political chaos that did not run its full course until Richard III, a monster-king deformed in body as in soul, brought England to the verge of ruin. This was a nadir from which only Queen Elizabeth's grandfather, Henry VII, the first Tudor, could deliver the nation.⁴ Shakespeare gives us a clue to this kind of historical thinking by having Richard II's queen refer to her husband's impending disaster as "a second fall" (*Richard II*, III. iv. 76). Moreover, Richard II so weds his conception of self to the doctrine of the divine right of kings, regarding himself as an extension of God on earth, that he fatally confuses his timeless and eternal body with his time-bound and finite body. Thus, he can unblushingly compare himself to Christ and his persecutors and betrayers to Pontius Pilate and Judas Iscariot. He sentences Bolingbroke and Mowbray to banishment with a kind of finality that suggests the assumption of divine rather than of human judgment. Bolingbroke comments bitterly on the difference between a king's sense of time and a mere subject's:

How long a time lies in one little word!
 Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
 End in a word; such is the breath of kings.

(I. iii. 213-215)

Richard's words of banishment ironically take on something of the force of the Word in St. John's sense of *logos*.

But the youthful king, of course, proves all too fallible and human as a ruler, and Shakespeare shows that he is very much the victim of time as well as, in another sense, its theologically privileged voice. Richard violates the very sanctions that entitle him to his own special authority. By confiscating his cousin's estates to finance his war in Ireland, he interrupts the orderly sequence of events over which he theoretically presides and of whose eternal law he considers himself to be the temporal enshrinement. York warns him of the disastrous inconsistency:

Take Hereford's rights away, and take from Time
 His charters and his customary rights;
 Let not tomorrow then ensue today;
 Be not thyself; for how art thou a king
 But by fair sequence and succession?

(II. i. 195-199)

The later plays contain many nostalgic allusions to Richard, and Shakespeare preserves the idea, inherited from the chronicles, that the multifarious sufferings of England flow in some primordial way from the crime of

deposing a legitimate monarch, the "deputy elected by the Lord" (*Richard II*, III. ii. 57). But he also undercuts this long-range Christian and mythic concept of historical causation by showing us Richard's ironically partial and self-deceived view of his own nature and by bringing him at length to a tragic recognition of his own time-boundness and finitude: "I wasted time, and now doth time waste me" (V. v. 49). And the unfolding events of the whole tetralogy repeatedly confirm our awareness of cyclical change, of bafflingly rapid fluctuation in political affairs, that runs counter to any sense of purposive or linear advance and that leaves us with a profound skepticism about historical providence or teleology.

Bolingbroke as king, sleeplessly speculating on how inscrutable the future is to those who would read her secrets, voices a more realistic and less comforting attitude toward historical process that cannot be set aside:

O God, that one might read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and the continent,
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself
Into the sea. . . .

O, if this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.

Henry continues, pessimistically reviewing the paradoxical shifts in human alliances that alter the course of nations:

'Tis not ten years gone
Since Richard and Northumberland, great friends,
Did feast together, and in two years after
Were they at wars. It is but eight years since
This Percy was the man nearest my soul,
Who like a brother toil'd in my affairs
And laid his love and life under my foot. . . .

(2 *Henry IV*, III. i. 45-63)

Thus does Bolingbroke notice—and Shakespeare through his words—that (to borrow a tragic phrase from *Romeo and Juliet*) "all things change them to the contrary" (IV. v. 90). Shakespearean chronicle plays may give some sense of a divine purpose in history, but they also create a countervailing weariness about the hope of plucking comfort from the giddy revolutions of Fortune's wheel. Bolingbroke's reaction to the "necessities" of mutability—even though (because of the principle of recurrence) they may enable us to look into the seeds of time—must be a gloomy stoicism:

Are these things then necessities?
Then let us meet them like necessities.

(2 *Henry IV*, III. i. 92, 93)

Since the opposed views of time suggested here nudge and modify each other in Shakespeare's dramatic practice, it is interesting to note that the histories as a group embrace both comedy and tragedy without succumbing totally to the generic dictates of either. Perhaps the dual perspective on history presupposes this combination: the medieval Christian view, though not lacking in tragic emphases (the murder of Abel, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the Crucifixion, for instance) is essentially comic in direction, while the classical view, though allowing for moments or periods that might justify optimism, is essentially pessimistic in its positing of ceaseless change and in the obscurity it implies as to final purpose.

The *Henry IV* plays balance comedy against tragedy brilliantly in the contrasted worlds of tavern and rebel camp. Both worlds are defined in part by their radically different sense of time. Indeed, opposing attitudes toward clock and calendar become a major device of characterization in these dramas. When we first meet Falstaff, the very incarnation of the comic spirit not only in the history plays but in all of Shakespeare, the fat knight is asking Hal, "What time of day is it, lad?" The prince's elaborate reply to this routine question is, of course, no answer at all, but a facetiously extended analysis of why the question itself has no relevance to Falstaff's style of life:

Thou art so fat-witted with drinking of old sack and unbuttoning thee after supper, and sleeping upon benches after noon, that thou hast forgotten to demand that truly which thou wouldst truly know. What a devil hast thou to do with the time of the day?

(1 *Henry IV*, I. ii. 1-6)

In the ethos of the tavern, which, incidentally, Falstaff carries with him both to Gadshill and to Shrewsbury, urgency has no meaning. Time is suspended for the sake of pleasurable escape from the grimmer realities of life. Refusing to acknowledge the discomforts of age in the robbery scene ("They hate us youth" [II. ii. 85], the old reprobate bellows), Falstaff willfully inhabits a fantasy world of playful adolescence, of eternal gaming and holiday, that does not fully dissipate until Hal's crushing rejection of him at the end of *Henry IV, Part II*. Even as late as the scenes in Gloucestershire, Falstaff, "play[ing] the fool. . .with the time" (2 *Henry IV*, II. ii. 134) in the prince's phrase, finds his actual past too painful to contemplate seriously and insists on a comic world of present amusement and future hope. To Shallow's senile reminiscences of their youthful highjinks fifty-five years ago when, as students, they "lay all night in the Windmill in Saint George's Field," Falstaff can only rejoin, "No more of that, good Master Shallow, no more of that" (2 *Henry IV*, III. ii. 193-196); and he begs Doll Tearsheet, who reminds him of his age, not to "speak like a death's-head": "do not bid me remember mine end" (II. iv. 232-233).

If the aging Falstaff symbolizes the comic refusal to accept his mortality by insisting on a world of eternal youth, Hotspur, his ironically youthful foil in the first play, is wedded to the tragic necessity—indeed almost the desire—of death for honor's sake. As his name implies, everything Hotspur says or does is associated with risk and with speed: "O, let the hours be short / Till fields and blows and groans applaud our sport!" (*1 Henry IV*, I. iii. 301-302). With a romantic's appetite for high adventure and importunity, he recognizes the brevity of life and measures human dignity not in years but in the quality and intensity of the life lived:

O gentlemen, the time of life is short!
 To spend that shortness basely were too long
 If life did ride upon a dial's point,
 Still ending at the arrival of an hour.
 And if we live, we live to tread on kings;
 If die, brave death, when princes die with us!
 (*1 Henry IV*, V. ii. 81-86)

Earlier, disdainful of the politic caution of Worcester and his cooler-headed colleagues, Hotspur even magnifies the odds against him for the sake of greater glory:

Come, let us take a muster speedily.
 Doomsday is near; die all, die merrily.
 (*1 Henry IV*, IV. i. 133-134)

Like Tennyson's Light Brigade, Hotspur rides cheerfully into the jaws of death, savoring each moment the more because it is likely to be among his last. Nowhere does Shakespeare make the contrary views of time—the comic versus the tragic—more emblematic than in the scene at Shrewsbury where Prince Hal stands between two apparent corpses—the athletic body of Hotspur, whom he has just robbed of his youth, and the decrepit body of Falstaff, who feigns death in order to evade its terrors and who then pops up like a jack-in-the-box the moment it is safe to do so. Tragedy and Comedy, the death wish and the life force, symbolically occupy the right and left sides of the same stage.

Prince Hal, who assimilates some of Falstaff's wit and love of fun without his cowardice and some of Hotspur's bravery and idealism without his rashness, embodies a more complex attitude toward time than either of his opponents in verbal or military combat. Hal may seem to ignore the importunities of the court and the battlefield temporarily, "awhile uphold[ing]/The unyoked humor of . . . idleness—" (*1 Henry IV*, I. ii. 189-190), but his game-playing, unlike Falstaff's, is self-consciously calculated and accommodated to a longer temporal perspective. In its consciousness of

foreseeable ends, Hal's sense of time may partake of both the comic and the tragic attitudes, but, in essence, it is political. The play-acting episode in the Boar's Head tavern ends with Falstaff in the role of Hal, pleading with the prince in the role of his father not to banish his corpulent companion: "banish plump Jack, and banish all the world." Characteristically, the prince answers with a double voice: "I do, I will" (*1 Henry IV*, II. iv. 474-476). Falstaff draws no line between the charade and the reality it parodies, but the prince, by his change of tense, shows us that he carefully distinguishes between the present fun and the future reform. Hal's playfulness is not escapist, not rooted in the confusion of recreation with work. The boy knows, like his rapidly aging father, that a prince has only one life in which to make his mark and, unlike Hotspur, that one cannot afford to be too intense or obsessively single-minded in his loyalties. As a consequence, we are slightly repelled by the coldly utilitarian construction that he seems to put upon his association with his tavern cronies.

In his death speech Hotspur reminds us poignantly that life is "time's fool, / And time, that takes survey of all the world, / Must have a stop" (*1 Henry IV*, V. iv. 81-83). Hotspur stops the clock tragically for himself by getting himself killed in a mistaken cause. Falstaff tries to stop the clock in another sense by willfully refusing to acknowledge its existence. Hal can absorb something of value from both associations without opposing himself to the inevitable flow of time. He grows from boy to man, from tavern roisterer to the princely savior of his father's life—finally to the kingly hero of Agincourt—by moving *with* rather than *against* the tide of history and, in some sense, harmonizing the political and the moral, the realistic and the Christian, insights into temporality. Through a synthesis of attitudes toward the relaxations and pressures of history, he "make[s] offense a skill, / Redeeming time when men think least [he] will" (*1 Henry IV*, I. ii. 210-211).

III

Not content with playing off the interlocking worlds of comedy, tragedy, and politics against each other in respect of their varying responses to time, Shakespeare also makes us aware of other temporal contrasts and concerns. One of his most effective techniques is the counterpointing of an external, objective sense of time with a more internal, subjective sense of it, so that, as an audience, we may experience history both from the perspective of a dispassionate looker-on and also through the eyes of feeling individuals. The external sense of time is, of course, linked to the action and could hardly be avoided by any dramatist. Thus, the plays are full of simple information about scheduling, such as Bolingbroke's announcement after the deposition of Richard, "On Wednesday next we solemnly proclaim / Our coronation.

Lords, be ready all" (*Richard II*, IV. i. 320-321), or Mortimer's statement about the rebel plans: "Tomorrow, cousin Percy, you and I / And my good Lord of Worcester will set forth / To meet your father and the Scottish power . . . at Shrewsbury" (*I Henry IV*, III. i. 80-83). But the ordinary sequence of events is constantly being intersected by a more private sense of time that discloses personality or lights up the moral or spiritual interior of a speaker. Richard II's heartless remark at the news of Gaunt's death shows us the flippant and youthful king at his most shallow:

The ripest fruit first falls, and so doth he;
His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be.
So much for that.

(*Richard II*, II. i. 153-155)

Then later on we are exposed to a deeper and more sympathetic example of Richard's interior sense of the clock, when, for the first and only time he is alone in the entire drama, he plays painfully at manufacturing a whole private microcosm based on the psychology of isolation. He works out an intricate poetical conceit by which his thoughts become minutes, his eyes the outward watch, his heart a bell that tolls the hours, and his finger, wiping away tears of grief, a dial's point:

So sighs and tears and groans
Show minutes, times, and hours. But my time
Runs posting on in Bolingbroke's proud joy,
While I stand here, his Jack of the clock.

(V. v. 57-60)

Richard constructs an inner world of time out of thoughts and emotions in a therapeutic attempt to adjust to an exterior onslaught of time that has passed him by. Thus does Shakespeare dramatize through a moving soliloquy how sorrow and joy make for different experiences of time and how dynastic change alters the tempo of life in diverse ways, depending on whether one is the loser or the winner.

Some of the playwright's most piercing ironies arise from niceties of historical timing. In the very scene in which Richard II disinherits his cousin, we learn that Bolingbroke has already raised an army and is even then making for England "with all due expedience" (*Richard II*, II. i. 287), apparently ignorant of the king's action against him.⁵ Then, after Bolingbroke has already consolidated his power, Richard himself returns from Ireland "one day too late" (III. ii. 67) to prevent the defection of his own adherents, and Salisbury wishes futilely that the inexorable march of the calendar could be reversed:

O, call back yesterday, bid time return,
 And thou shalt have twelve thousand fighting men!
 Today, today, unhappy day, too late,
 O'erthrows thy joys, friends, fortune, and thy state;
 For all the Welshmen, hearing thou wert dead,
 Are gone to Bolingbroke, dispers'd, and fled.

(III. ii. 69-74)

In this dramatic juxtaposition Shakespeare hints that Bolingbroke ambitiously rushes the time for his own political advantage while Richard's more leisurely and passive approach to political crisis is self-defeating. The king loses even before he can begin to fight. Bolingbroke makes time his servant. Richard becomes time's prey.

The collision of two differing misperceptions of time in *2 Henry IV* makes for one of the most memorably ironic episodes of the entire tetralogy. Prince Hal enters the bedchamber of his father and, thinking the king dead, reverently takes his crown from its pillow in the belief that his most solemn moment of responsibility has at last arrived. Then the king awakes, and, doubtless remembering his own youthful seizure of the diadem from Richard, misinterprets his son's behavior as an act of usurpation:

Dost thou so hunger for mine empty chair
 That thou wilt needs invest thee with my honors
 Before thy hour be ripe? O foolish youth,
 Thou seek'st the greatness that will overwhelm thee

What, canst thou not forbear me half an hour?
 Then get thee gone and dig my grave thyself. . . .

(*2 Henry IV*, IV. v. 94-110)

Henry IV protracts this misplaced rebuke to his son almost unendurably, bitterly alleging that "a time is come to mock at form" (IV. v. 118) at the very moment when Hal's consciousness of kingly form and identity has been raised to its highest pitch of intensity.

One of the ways in which Shakespeare conveys the sense of history developing and exfoliating before our eyes is to intermingle immediate with more remote, short-term with longer-term, measurements of time. The histories are replete with a feeling for temporality in its quotidian and urgent aspects. Historical drama depends for its background effects on verisimilar touches of location and period that lend a sense of "then-ness" to the play; but, in addition, its dramatic movement requires relationships of rapid cause and effect, of quick stimulus and response. The play, to come alive on stage, must make us care about the links between what happened ten minutes ago and what is happening now or will happen very soon—or, in the time scheme of the drama itself, between yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This is the sensation of temporality that Shakespeare dramatizes when he shows us

Hotspur rushing fatally into battle without pausing to read important letters ("I cannot read them now!" [1 *Henry IV*, V. ii. 80]), or when messages arrive at the Boar's Head summoning Falstaff and Hal to the colors ("I'll to the court in the morning. We must all to the wars. . . I'll procure this fat rogue a charge of foot. . ."[1 *Henry IV*, II. iv. 538-540]).

But longer perspectives interrupt this sense of daily bustle, connecting present urgencies with a more distant awareness of both past and future. The rebels are forever revising the past as a way of displacing their own guilt. When Henry IV, the usurper whom they have helped bring to power, disappoints their expectations, they reclothe Richard's memory in the robes of sentimentality and besmirch their own former leader. From the new revisionist angle of perception, Richard now becomes "that sweet lovely rose" and the king who supplanted him "this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke" (1 *Henry IV*, I. iii. 175-176). The meritorious exile whose injustice they had once claimed to be righting has suddenly been transformed through self-deceptive rhetoric into "a poor unminded outlaw sneaking home" (IV. iii. 58). The gap between the original "then" and the "then" as perceived in this curiously skewed "now" becomes a major source of dramatic irony.

The prophecies with which the histories are laden also produce a sense of temporal distance in the forward direction—and with no less irony. The Bishop of Carlisle predicts that the deposition of an anointed king will transform England into a second Golgotha, bringing in its wake "Disorder, horror, fear, and mutiny" (*Richard II*, IV. i. 143) to successive generations, and he is instantly arrested for speaking a truth that everyone in the audience knew had already come to pass. Richard himself correctly predicts that Northumberland will be just as disloyal to his new master as to his old, and, when this happens in the plays that follow, Shakespeare pointedly reminds his audience of what was said but ignored in the first instance:

King Henry. But which of you was by—
 [To Warwick.] You, cousin Nevil, as I may remember—
 When Richard, with his eye brimful of tears,
 Then check'd and rated by Northumberland,
 Did speak these words, now prov'd a prophecy?
 "Northumberland, thou ladder by the which
 My cousin Bolingbroke ascends my throne"—
 Though then, God knows, I had no such intent,
 But that necessary so bow'd the state
 That I and greatness were compell'd to kiss—
 "The time shall come," thus did he follow it,
 "The time will come, that foul sin, gathering head,
 Shall break into corruption"—so went on,
 Foretelling this same time's condition
 And the division of our amity.

Warwick. There is a history in all men's lives,
 Figuring the nature of the times deceas'd,
 The which observ'd, a man may prophesy,
 With a near aim, of the main chance of things
 As yet not come to life. . . .

(2 *Henry IV*, III. i. 65-84)

The long-range perspectives, whether of past or future, tend to lend the immediate actions something of the status of myth, thus conferring upon them a cultural dignity and significance they might otherwise lack. This dilation or expansion of a particular political context thus deepens the dramatic resonance effectively. Richard of Bordeaux, for instance, sees his own tragedy as part of a venerable literary tradition: the "lamentable tale of me" (*Richard II*, V. i. 44) that he enjoins his wife to narrate to future auditors in France becomes one more addition to that swelling anthology of "sad stories of the death of kings" (III. ii. 156) to which he had earlier referred. But Richard becomes the type of the murdered and desecrated monarch, not merely another example, through the literary and biblical traditions with which he so self-consciously associates himself. And Henry V before Agincourt inspires his troops with the promise that their bravery against almost impossible odds will enshrine them forever in the national memory:

He that shall see this day, and live old age,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,
 And say, "Tomorrow is Saint Crispian."
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
 And say, "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."
 Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember with advantages
 What feats he did that day. . . .

This story shall the good man teach his son;
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remembered—
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers.

(*Henry V*, IV. iii. 44-60)

Nor is the tetralogy without its comic memories. Shallow lives wholly in the distant past—the frail relic of a bygone age the sexual excitements of which he vastly exaggerates in the impotence of his present condition: "Jesu, Jesu, the mad days that I have spent!" (2 *Henry IV*, III. ii. 33). The even wispier Silence joins the concept of time past to a unique compound of pathos and hilarity. When Silence, somewhat surprisingly, breaks into a drinking song and Falstaff is astonished to discover that he possesses enough vocal energy for the feat, the old man's response is delicious: "Who I? I have been merry twice and once ere now" (V. iii. 39-40).

IV

Thus does Shakespeare weave the mingled yarn of pastness, presentness, and futurity into the richest of dramatic tapestries. Prince Hal can drink in Eastcheap with Poins while reminding us of our common parent (he refers in passing to "the old days of goodman Adam" [*1 Henry IV*, II. iv. 93]), and Hotspur can locate his own demise in the wider context of time's ultimate cessation at the last trump. But, if in some sense Shakespeare takes all of time for his province, what finally may we say that his concept of it was?

The answer must be, I think, that the complexity of the individual plays—not to mention the additional complexity of their interrelatedness—makes it hazardous to affix labels. Many attitudes toward time are embodied in the plays I have been discussing, and there are still others to be found elsewhere in Shakespeare. But by way of conclusion it might be well to notice that the second tetralogy ends paradoxically with the same mixture of comic and tragic implications about time that we have been remarking throughout the series. The emergence of Prince Hal as "the mirror of all Christian kings" (*Henry V*, II, *Prologue*, 6) and the miraculous victor of Agincourt suggests the happy resolution of comedy. In marrying Katherine and joining England to France, Henry V concludes the final play in a way that reminds us of a romance structure with its "happily-ever-after" sense of finality. Certainly the closure of this history play implies a sunnier future for the nation than we have ever had reason to expect at earlier points in the historical sequence. England under Henry seems to have realized her greatest and most heroic potential, and Agincourt seems to have culminated her finest hour.

But the epilogue sounds a disquieting chord, reminding the audience that Henry's reign, however "greatly lived," was but a "Small time" (1.5). The longer shadow that time inevitably casts darkened the glory of "This star of England" (1.6), and the poet sadly reminds us that Henry's son, who inherited the crown as a babe in arms, "lost France" through his weakness and, in the civil chaos that ensued, once more "made his England bleed" (1.12). The historical wheel, in other words, continues to revolve, and, in this case, it comes full circle, for Shakespeare returns our memories to the internecine strife that he had dramatized in his earliest chronicles, the three parts of *Henry VI*. And, as if this were not enough to dampen the comic optimism, Shakespeare gives us a funny but also pathetic account of Falstaff's death through the uncomprehending lips of Mistress Quickly. If the whirligig of time has brought Henry V success as a king, it has also brought in its revenges, for it diminishes him as a man through the rejection and loss of his most affectionate and emotionally vital companion.

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Notes

¹This point has been developed *in extenso* by David Scott Kastan in *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 23-27, 37-55. Kastan, in turn, builds upon the work of Tom Driver and Ricardo Quinones; see Driver, *The Sense of History in Greek and Shakespearean Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), and Quinones, *The Renaissance Discovery of Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

²The edition of Shakespeare quoted throughout is *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington (Glenview, Ill., Scott, Foresman, 1980).

³See Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's "Histories": Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1958); also David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

⁴As Henry Ansgar Kelly has usefully demonstrated, this formulation of the so-called Tudor myth, heavily indebted to E.M.W. Tillyard's influential *Shakespeare's History Plays* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1944), represents an historiographical oversimplification. Kelly refers to it as "an *ex post facto* Platonic Form, made up of many fragments that were never fitted together into a mental pattern until they felt the force of [Tillyard's] synthesizing energy"; see Kelly, *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 298.

⁵Although the apparent simultaneity of Richard's violation of Bolingbroke's rights and the latter's armed invasion of England might be explained, to quote Bevington, as "owing to Shakespeare's characteristic compression of historic time," we nevertheless "gain the impression of an already-existing plot" against the king; see Bevington's introduction to the play in his *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, p. 756.

Shylock: "His stones, his daughter, and his ducats" by Shirley Nelson Garner

After Jessica elopes with Lorenzo in Act II of *The Merchant of Venice*, "all the boys in Venice," we are told, follow Shylock in the streets mocking him, "crying his stones, his daughter, and his ducats."¹ Their bawdy pun on stones, meaning both "jewels" and "testicles," associates Shylock's loss of his daughter and his money with castration. Jessica's elopement is disastrous for Shylock, and after it, he is not the same. In Act I, he appears as a shrewd businessman, able not only to survive as an alien among hostile Venetians, but even to rival them financially. The teasing irony with which he offers Antonio terms mirrors his confidence. After Jessica's elopement, he never again uses irony and pursues his "losing suit" (IV. i. 62) to his own destruction.

Others have seen Jessica's elopement as crucial.² Yet the significance of her act has been overshadowed by Shylock's stunning response to it: "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear: would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin" (III. i. 80-82). Given Shylock's psychology, his Jewishness, and his conflict with Antonio and the other Venetians, we can hardly overestimate the impact of Jessica's elopement with Lorenzo. Its force comes from Shylock's extraordinary efforts to deny the essential meaning of the elopement—that Jessica does not love him—and more importantly, from its place in the conflict between Shylock and Antonio.

I

The enmity between Shylock and Antonio so immediately apparent at the beginning of *The Merchant of Venice* is not mainly between Christian and Jew, free-lending Venetian merchant and alien usurer. It is more elemental: an antagonism between men who want power over each other. As the circumstances and language of the play make clear, their conflict is sexual, and accordingly intense. Neither is content merely to win over the other; each wants to destroy the other's manliness.

When Antonio and Bassanio come to Shylock to borrow money, we learn that earlier Antonio has called Shylock "dog," spit on him, and kicked him (I. iii. 106-124). When Shylock reproaches him for his insults, Antonio unashamedly replies, "I am as like to call thee so again, /To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too" (I. iii. 125-26). As a circumcised man, Jew, and alien in Venetian society, Shylock is symbolically castrated.³ Antonio's abuse of him both reveals his castration and reenacts it.

In calling Shylock "dog" and spitting on him, Antonio disparages his

humanity in general and his masculinity in particular. Both forms of insult specifically brand Shylock a coward. As Antonio taunts him with the name "dog," he implies that Shylock is cowardly⁴ as well as contemptible, feelingless, and cruel.⁵ Like pulling the beard or tweaking the nose, spitting on someone in the sixteenth century also proclaimed him a coward and, further, invited a challenge. When Mowbray challenges Bolingbroke in *Richard II*, he phrases it, "I do defy him, and I spit at him, / Call him a slanderous coward and a villain" (I. i. 60-61). The clown in *The Winter's Tale* says of Autolycus, "Not a more cowardly rogue in all Bohemia; if you had but looked big, and spit at him, he'd have run" (IV. iii. 106-108).

As the clown's assessment of Autolycus makes clear, a man's failure to answer such an affront marks him. As a Jew, however, Shylock cannot respond to Antonio. Both law and custom prohibit it. As we learn in the trial scene, the law in Shakespeare's Venice forbids an alien to make any direct or indirect attempt on a citizen's life, upon penalty of the loss of all his goods and possible death (IV. i. 344-52). Shylock also stands outside the "laws of honor." As equals, the Capulets and Montagues, Hamlet and Laertes, Mowbray and Bolingbroke act out their enmities through duelling. But there are no such rituals for Antonio and Shylock. Shylock qualifies on several counts for a place among persons who were unquestionably denied the "field of honor": those committing treason, spies, deserters, "theeves, robbers, ruffians, taverne hunters, excommunicate persons, hereticks, usurers, and all persons, not living as a Gentleman or a Souldier."⁶ If he challenges Antonio, as though he were an equal, Antonio would undoubtedly refuse him according to the gentleman's code, subjecting him to further ridicule and disgrace (Saviolo, p. 413). His only prudent recourse is to bear Antonio's insults "with a patient shrug" (I. iii. 104).⁷

Though Antonio comes to Shylock for help at the beginning of the play, we learn that the two have long been playing another scene off-stage, in which Shylock has had to submit to Antonio's continual humiliation. Repeatedly, Antonio has reminded Shylock that Venetian society regards him as less than a man and, at the same time, has forced him to play the role of "coward." Shylock has acted that part because he could not do otherwise. Forbidden by law and custom to express his anger, he has had to repress it. It surfaces in the hostility and bitterness we see when Shylock first appears.

His first appearance in Act I, scene iii, is a moment of triumph, his only such moment in the play. Shylock triumphs, of course, because the Christian merchant who has abused and reviled him must now come to him for money. But he wins in a more significant way. In framing the bond that Antonio signs, he creates his own means for fighting his antagonist. Though he cannot use arms to defend himself against Antonio's insults, he can use the law, where he, as a Jew and a money-lender, finds a natural weapon. Shylock's

victory and his pleasure lie in making Antonio accede to an agreement that he has created to be particularly humiliating.

Since Shakespeare goes out of his way to show how improbable it is that Antonio will be unable to repay Shylock's loan, and thereby forfeit a pound of his flesh, Shylock's satisfaction at Antonio's agreeing to his "merry bond" cannot come from anticipating the cruelty he might eventually wreak on his enemy. Despite his wish to catch Antonio "upon the hip," to "feed fat the ancient grudge" (II. 41-42) he bears him, he can have only the remotest hope of realizing that wish through the bond.

In the opening lines of the play, Shakespeare depicts Antonio as virtually beyond financial ruin. When Salerio and Solanio suggest that Antonio's sadness arises from his anxiety over the possible loss of his ships, and hence his fortune, the merchant answers confidently:

My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

(I. i. 42-45)

Shylock also knows the disposition of Antonio's fortune (I. iii. 13-24), and we do not doubt his estimation of Antonio as a "good man," a good credit risk (I. iii. 11-15). Shakespeare again emphasizes Antonio's financial stability by making his failure depend on an absurd improbability: the loss of six ships—all wrecked by "the dreadful touch/Of merchant-marring rocks"—bound for different ports on several seas. He even constructs the dialogue that reveals Antonio's loss to call attention to its improbability. We can almost hear the playwright and the actors breaking the aesthetic distance, parodying the plot. Bassanio asks:

But is it true Salerio?
Hath all his ventures fail'd? what not one hit?
From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India,
And not one vessel scape the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks?

Salerio answers, "Not one my lord" (III. ii. 265-70).

The teasing spirit in which Shylock offers terms, then, does not derive from his expectation that Antonio will have to forfeit a pound of flesh. It comes from the fact that Antonio's mere agreement to sign such a bond necessarily degrades him. To agree to give one's flesh for money is to prostitute oneself. Antonio, moreover, abases himself even further, for by consenting, he grants Shylock the power to castrate him if he forfeits.⁸

Antonio surely catches the threat of castration in Shylock's stipulation:

Let the forfeit
 Be nominated for an equal pound
 Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
 In what part of your body pleaseth me.

(I. iii. 144-47)

In leaving the particular pound of flesh unspecified, Shakespeare follows Ser Giovanni's *Il Pecorone*, the source on which he drew most heavily. Both authors make their characters state the agreement in general terms because they wish to suggest the possibility of castration. In *Il Pecorone*, Giovanni maintains the fear, suspense, and fascination this possibility raises until the last moment: "Then the Jew ordered him [Ansaldo] to be stripped naked, and took a razor in his hand which he had got for the purpose."⁹ At this point, the lawyer intervenes, and Giovanni never makes clear the Jew's specific intention. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare does not reveal until the middle of the trial scene that the bond which Antonio actually signs, off-stage, gives Shylock the right to a pound of flesh "nearest the merchant's heart" (IV. i. 229, 250). Had Shakespeare not wanted Shylock to threaten Antonio with castration, he might have followed Antony Munday's example in *Zelauto*. There the usurer Truculento stipulates at the outset that both Rudolpho and Strabino must lose their right eyes if they fail to repay him. Shakespeare presents the threat of castration even more clearly than Giovanni does when he has Shylock speak of the flesh that is "to be *cut off* [*italics mine*] and taken." In *Il Pecorone* the narrator says merely that "the Jew might take [*levare*] a pound of flesh" (p. 146). *Levare* means to "take" in the sense of "levy" or "collect" and is not comparable to "cut off."

This understanding of the bond gives new force to Shylock's preceding dialogue with Antonio:

Why look you how you storm!
 I would be friends with you, and have your love,
 Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,
 Supply your present wants, and take no doit
 Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me,—
 This is kind I offer.

(I. iii. 133-38)

"Kind," as John R. Brown has observed, carried multiple meanings: "benevolent," "generous," "natural" (I. iii. 90*n*, 138*n*). It also means "similar in nature": As Antonio has castrated Shylock, Shylock will return the favor in kind by castrating him.

Bassanio's immediate response, "You shall not seal to such a bond for me, / I'll rather dwell in my necessity" (I. iii. 150-51) suggests that he is embarrassed, even horrified, by Shylock's proposition. Assured that he will be able to repay Shylock, Antonio is untroubled by the terms of forfeit:

Why fear not man, I will not forfeit it,—
 Within these two months, that's a month before
 This bond expires, I do expect return
 Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

(I. iii. 152-55)

His commendation of Shylock's "kindness" (II. 149, 174) reflects his certainty that borrowing money from the usurer will have no untoward consequences, since he will not have to pay interest and does not expect to forfeit.

If Shylock has framed the bond to be humiliating in itself, as I have said, how can Antonio fail to recognize the degradation he necessarily suffers in promising flesh in exchange for money, as his tone might suggest? I think Antonio is very much aware of Shylock's insult and his own humiliation, but chooses to ignore it. By ignoring it and focusing on his certainty that he will not have to forfeit, he quiets Bassanio's uneasiness. Once Bassanio allows Antonio to borrow money for him on such terms, he locks himself into a relationship that will allow Antonio to manipulate him to the end. Antonio's power over Bassanio later in the play is so strong not merely because Antonio has jeopardized his life for his friend, but also because Antonio has humiliated himself for Bassanio. Since Bassanio loves Portia and Antonio is homoerotically attracted to him, Antonio knows that the only power he can have over Bassanio to rival Portia's must come from guilt since it will not come from love.¹⁰ Antonio's agreeing to the bond is a manipulative rather than a generous act, and through it, Shakespeare clearly intends to present Antonio ambivalently.¹¹

From the beginning of the play, Shakespeare asks us to participate in a conflict between powerful and complicated adversaries, each of whom will victimize the other if he can. The tendency to view the conflict as stemming from Shylock's "villainy" is largely a result of excusing Antonio, of stereotyping him as "generous Christian." Critics can see Antonio as essentially good only by overlooking the fact that he repeatedly spits on, kicks, and abuses a man whom he knows cannot retaliate.¹² They must also repress their misgivings at his consenting to sign a humiliating agreement with Shylock.

II

Shylock's ascendancy is brief. When he learns in Act II that Jessica has eloped with Lorenzo, taking the wealth with which he has entrusted her, he becomes distraught, as Solanio reports:

I never heard a passion so confus'd,
 So strange, outrageous, and so variable
 As the dog Jew did utter in the streets,—
 "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!

Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!
 Justice, the law, my ducats, and my daughter!
 A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
 Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!
 And jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones,
 Stol'n by my daughter! Justice!—find the girl,
 She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats!"

(II. viii. 12-22)

Shylock's lament for the loss of his "two sealed bags of ducats" and his "jewels, two stones, two rich and precious stones" continues the theme of castration.¹³ The bawdy *double entendre* calls more attention to itself than Shylock's literal meaning. Shylock becomes the mock for Venetian boys—who follow him "crying his stones, his daughter, and his ducats" (II. 23-24)—not because he has lost his daughter and his riches but because that loss signifies his castration.

Shylock immediately feels that it is Jessica who has wronged him. She is the castrator. She has stolen the "two sealed bags of ducats" and the "two rich and precious stones." "Stolen *by my daughter*" is his repeated cry. From his perspective, he is right. Her elopement utterly denies his power over her as a father and as a man. She marries without his consent, chooses a husband unlike him in every way (Venetian, Christian, free-spirited, pleasure-loving, uncircumcised), allies herself with his enemies, and even steals from him to endow her marriage.

Shylock's outrage is generally seen to be as much over the loss of his money and jewels as of his daughter, if not more so, and a supreme instance of his greed. But Shylock does not dissociate Jessica and his wealth, nor do the circumstances of the play suggest that he should.

Money is power in Shakespeare's Venice. And even more. Sigurd Burckhardt has said it best: "In this merchant's world money is a great good, is life itself."¹⁴ Shylock is not the only character who thinks so. Antonio, Portia, Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Jessica do, too. They all connect money and love, as many have commented. If Shylock is more grasping than the others, he is so because for him, unlike them, money offers his only source of power. He cannot gain love, or even acceptance, through his wealth, but he can achieve some recognition: the Venetians do have to come to him to borrow.

By making Jessica the keeper of his wealth, as he does when he entrusts her with the household keys in his absence (II. v. 12), he signifies that he trusts her.¹⁵ And trust is as close as he can come to an expression of love. When Jessica betrays his trust, she shows that she neither loves him nor respects him; moreover, in robbing him, she diminishes his source of power. It is no wonder that he curses her: "I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear: would she were hears'd at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin" (III. i. 80-82).

Other fathers in Shakespeare's plays wish their children dead, or the equivalent, when they disobey or displease them: Capulet tells Juliet he will not acknowledge her unless she marries Paris though she "hang, beg, starve, die in the streets" (*Rom.* III. v. 194-95); Henry IV wishes that some "night-tripping fairy" had exchanged Hal and Hotspur in their cradles (*1H4*, I. i. 85-89); Egeus demands that Hermia die according to Athenian law unless she marries Demetrius (*MND*, I. i. 38-45). King Lear banishes Cordelia.

What horrifies us about Shylock's response is its nakedness: "I would my daughter were dead at my foot." He does not veil his wish with talk of night-tripping fairies or of his rights under the law. We tend to associate his talk of jewels and ducats with his avarice, a less romantic sin than those of which the other fathers are guilty, and therefore, less forgivable. Because his curse is so appalling, no critic, to my knowledge, has noticed that Shylock does not want to recover for himself the wealth that Jessica has stolen. He wants it buried. He says that he wants his daughter "hears'd," i.e., enclosed or buried in a coffin, at his foot with the "jewels in her ear" and "the ducats in her coffin." Later, he wants Antonio's death more than he wants three times his money (IV. i. 230-38). Some things do matter more to him than his money.

He wants Jessica dead and the money and jewels that she stole buried with her in order to forget her, to blot out the pain she causes him. Shylock does not want to be reminded that he ventured a personal risk that gave him no return. Even if Jessica's death would not erase his loss, Jessica alive will cause him endless torment. If she dies, he loses her once and for all, but if she lives, he will lose her over and over again as he continually hears of her and her life with Lorenzo. Living, as he must imagine she will, a converted Christian (III. v. 17-18), siding with his enemies against him, she will only bring him grief, anger, and embarrassment. His curse reflects that awareness.

However understandable and justifiable Shakespeare makes Jessica's elopement, he draws it so as to create sympathy for Shylock. To some extent, Shylock is in the line of Shakespeare's controlling and possessive fathers—Capulet, Egeus, Brabantio, Lear. Because Shylock keeps a "sober house," shut and locked against pleasure (II. v. 28-36), Jessica's escape from a place she finds a "hell" (II. iii. 2) wins the audience's approval. But beyond that, sympathy for Jessica is tenuous. Shakespeare involves both the audience and the other characters more with Juliet, Hermia, Desdemona, and Cordelia; he provides only a few glimpses of Jessica and draws her character thinly. She rebels more angrily than Shakespeare's other daughters and more harshly against Shylock than he seems to deserve. Shylock is not making the unreasonable demands of her that Egeus and Capulet make of their daughters; he has not invited Lorenzo to his home as Brabantio has Othello; Shakespeare does not show Shylock demanding exclusive love from Jessica as Lear does from Cordelia. None of Shakespeare's disobedient daughters

leaves her father so coolly as Jessica: "Farewell—and if my fortune be not crost, / I have a father, you a daughter, lost" (II. v. 55-56). None of them steals her father's money to provide her means. None of them dishonors her parents as Jessica does when she trades Shylock's ring, a gift from her mother, for a monkey (III. i. 108-111).

Had Shakespeare wanted to make Jessica more sympathetic, the example of Marlowe's Abigail was before him.¹⁶ In *The Jew of Malta*, Abigail flees Barabas's house only after he is responsible for the death of her fiancé. Unlike Jessica, she does not elope to a more gracious life, but rather renounces the sumptuousness Barabas offers to join a convent. Though she converts to Christianity, she does not align herself with her father's enemies, as does Jessica, who testifies freely against Shylock (III. ii. 283-89). Abigail reveals Barabas's crimes only as a necessary part of her own confession, made after her priest guarantees that it is privileged and will be kept secret (III. vi. 31-37). She even wishes for her father's conversion and salvation (II. 38-40), whereas Jessica seems to have no interest in her father's fate once she is not part of it.

III

After Jessica elopes, Shylock wants to avenge himself against her as well as Antonio and the other Venetians. Becoming the victim of his own vengeful rage, he loses the sense that has allowed him to survive.

Since Jessica elopes willingly with Lorenzo and is not seduced or abducted, she is responsible for her actions. But her acts and the wrong she does Shylock quickly become a part of Shylock's conflict with Antonio and his friends. Though Shylock blames Jessica, as we have seen, he also implicates the Venetians, as they expect him to. Solanio warns immediately, "Let good Antonio look he keep his day / Or he shall pay for this" (II. viii, 25-26). Shylock accuses Solanio and Salerio, "You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight" (III. i. 22-23), suggesting that he either suspects or knows that the two Venetians played a part in Lorenzo's and Jessica's elopement. Antonio later speaks approvingly of Lorenzo as "the gentleman" who "stole" Shylock's daughter (IV. i. 380-81).

Both the Venetians and Shylock see women as property. The Venetians assume that Jessica's elopement is Lorenzo's theft and that Shylock will hold them responsible for it. In reproaching Salerio and Solanio, Shylock suggests that their knowledge of Jessica's elopement is complicity. He must also recognize that Lorenzo's crime could not have been more splendidly wrought. Only by stealing Shylock's daughter could Lorenzo get away with stealing Shylock's money.

When Shylock takes revenge on Antonio, he wants to avenge Antonio's old wrongs against him and also Lorenzo's "theft" of Jessica. Since he also

wants to avenge himself against Jessica and cannot, he displaces the anger he ought to feel toward her onto Antonio.

Jessica's behavior after her elopement expresses her contempt for Shylock and his values in ways that can only provoke the most terrible anger and pain in response. Her extravagant spending—"fourscore ducats" in a night (III. i. 98-99)—rebukes his obsessive getting. Her exchange of Shylock's ring, which her mother had undoubtedly given her father as a love token, for a monkey is one of Shakespeare's most marvelously imagined rejections. By trading a symbol of her parents' union for a novelty, a pet, Jessica ridicules their love and, in effect, disinherits herself. By trading the ring for a monkey, a symbol of lechery, she flaunts her rejection of Shylock's austerity.¹⁷

Shakespeare's aim in counterpointing Shylock's responses to the news of Jessica's spending spree and Antonio's losses at sea (III. i. 72-120) is to indicate that Jessica's actions cause his hatred of Antonio to intensify. When he first hears of Antonio's losses, he praises God and laughs; as Tubal spins out his tale of Jessica, Shylock threatens, "I'll plague him, I'll torture him," and finally resolves, "I will have the heart of him if he forfeit." After this scene, Shylock mentions Jessica only once and briefly (IV. i. 291-93). He has wished her dead. Now he kills her the only way he can: by repressing his thoughts of her.

Yet Jessica is never far from Shylock's consciousness as two moments in the trial scene reveal. Early, when Shylock is "justifying" his insistence on Antonio's pound of flesh on the grounds that he has bought it, and should be able to do with it as he likes, he reminds the Duke:

You have among you many a purchas'd slave,
Which (like your asses, and your dogs and mules)
You use in abject and in slavish parts,
Because you bought them,—shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?

(IV. i. 90-94)

Since the first example of inappropriate good treatment of slaves that occurs to Shylock is their marriage to the Venetians' heirs, it is clear that Jessica's "bad match" (III. i. 39) is very much on his mind. Hearing Bassanio and Gratiano say that they would sacrifice their wives to save Antonio, Shylock immediately exclaims in an aside, "These be the Christian husbands!" and then remembers:

I have a daughter—
Would any of the stock of Barrabas
Had been her husband, rather than a Christian.

(IV. i. 291-93)

Shylock expresses his repressed rage against Jessica in his relentless

insistence on collecting his pound of Antonio's flesh.

Though Shylock had little hope at the outset that Antonio would have to forfeit and got considerable pleasure from his own creation of the bond and Antonio's agreement to it, there is no doubt that if he had a chance to catch Antonio "upon the hip," he planned all along to take it. Jessica tells Portia and Bassanio:

I have heard him swear
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
Than twenty times the value of the sum
That he did owe him.

(III. ii. 283-87)

But once he has his chance, Shylock becomes the prey to his own fury. The Shylock we see in Act I is a powerful, competitive man, shrewd enough to know when he must bear Antonio's insults and when he may press his advantage. Once the anger that he bears toward Jessica is directed toward Antonio, intensifying an antipathy already so strong that it can hardly be constrained, Shylock loses the sense that has always saved him in an alien world. He pursues his bloody suit in the face of the Duke's untoward, and even hostile, court to his own destruction.

The audience's experience of other pound-of-flesh stories assures them that Shakespeare will not allow Shylock to take his pound of flesh. Their suspense is involved in how, not whether, he will be prevented. Within the world of the play, too, it seems unlikely that Antonio will have to forfeit. Salerio regards Shylock incredulously, as though he has confused fiction and life: "Why I am sure if he [Antonio] forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh,—what's that good for?" (III. i. 45-46). Solanio assures Antonio, "I am sure the duke / Will never grant this forfeiture to hold" (III. iii. 24-25). At the trial, the Duke is not impartial, but on Antonio's side from the beginning: "We all expect a gentle answer Jew!" (IV. i. 34). When Shylock presses his suit, "I stand for judgment,—answer, shall I have it?" (IV. i. 103), the Duke stalls:

Upon my power I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario (a learned doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this)
Come here to-day.

(II. 104-107)

It is clear that as long as the Duke is in power, Shylock will not prevail.

No one in the play or the audience wants Shylock to carve out Antonio's heart. No matter how sympathetic we are toward Shylock or unsympathetic toward Antonio, we, of course, want and expect Portia to extricate Antonio. Portia's teasing of both Shylock and Antonio—by leading the one to think he

will be allowed to collect the bond, the other to think he will die—would seem to chastize both of them. But finally, despite her eloquence about mercy, her own mercy extends only to Antonio.

The Duke pardons Shylock's life, showing himself to be more merciful than Gratiano, who continually urges Shylock's hanging. He also stipulates that if Shylock is humble enough, the State may only fine him rather than take half his wealth, to which it is entitled. But when Portia turns to Antonio, "What mercy can you render him Antonio?" (IV. i. 374), Antonio cannot be said to be merciful. He takes the other half of Shylock's wealth, which is due to him, to give upon Shylock's death to Lorenzo, "the gentleman / That lately stole his daughter" (IV. i. 380-81). Disapproving of usury, he now approves of theft—so long as it is a gentile's theft of a Jew's daughter. In effect, he forces Shylock to recognize Jessica's marriage to Lorenzo. By providing, in addition, that Shylock leave all he dies possessed of to Lorenzo and Jessica, Antonio deprives him of his only power over Jessica—the power to disinherit her. Generous as this may be to Lorenzo and Jessica, it can hardly be seen as merciful to Shylock.

Concerning Antonio's mercifulness in stipulating that Shylock must become a Christian, eloquent arguments have been made.¹⁸ But no Jew in the sixteenth century or now would consider that sentence merciful unless the alternative were death, which it is not since the Duke has already granted Shylock his life. The eagerness with which Jews embraced Christianity in the sixteenth century is suggested by the fact that during Shakespeare's lifetime up until he wrote *The Merchant of Venice*, only three Jews lived in England's *Domus Conversorum*, a royal home for converted Jews.¹⁹ I do not think Christians in the sixteenth century would generally have seen forced conversion as merciful either. Historically, it was the lesser of two evils. Jews in Portugal, for example, were offered in 1497 "the choice between conversion to Christianity and massacre."²⁰ In *The Jew of Malta*, the Christians tell the Jews that unless they give money to help pay tribute the Turks are demanding, they will have to convert to Christianity (I. ii. 73-74). Marlowe leaves no doubt that forced conversion would have been regarded as a punishment.

Far from acting generously toward Shylock, Antonio actually limits the Duke's mercy. The Duke has granted Shylock his life and has held out the hope that he will probably be allowed, upon good behavior, of course, to retain a living income. After the Duke's sentence, Shylock has his life, his freedom, and the hope of a reasonable income. Antonio's new stricture changes Shylock's sentence to the equivalent of life imprisonment by isolating him. A converted Christian, he will be excluded from the Jewish community. If we should imagine that he will be assimilated into the Christian community, Act V's silence on that matter and on Shylock should

make clear that assimilation will not be possible even if Shylock should desire it. Antonio is more merciful than Gratiano; he evidently concurs with the Duke's decision to grant Shylock's life. But Antonio's mercy is finally only political mercy, not Christian. It does not come from *caritas*.

At the end of the trial, Shylock is left powerless. Without "his stones, his daughter, and his ducats," he is now deprived of his religion, his last mark of identity, his only source of solace. Appropriately, it is Antonio who deals him the final blow. At the beginning of the trial, the Duke warns, "We all expect a gentle answer Jew!" (IV. i. 34). Now Portia echoes him in lines that can only be rendered in a threatening tone, "Art thou contented Jew? what dost thou say?" (IV. i. 389). Shylock answers as he must, "I am content." He again puts on the humility he had been forced to assume in the face of Antonio's earlier insults. Though Portia silences any verbal expression of anger or repulsion, his physical response indicates his feelings, "I pray you give me leave to go from hence, / I am not well" (IV. i. 391-92). His language is the same that Albany uses to describe Regan's symptoms when she is dying of poisoning, "She is not well" (*Lr.* V. iii. 107).

Unlike Malvolio's defeat in *Twelfth Night*, Shylock's defeat does not come off as comic resolution. The memory of him, alone and stripped of his identity, lingers to darken the final act of *The Merchant of Venice*. Though the conflict between Shylock and Antonio is ended with Shylock's defeat and humiliation, the causes of their enmity—the failure of humanity and of love, the need for power over others—are still present. Like Venice, Belmont is tarnished. The pairing of lovers is tenuous. Lorenzo and Jessica recall pairs of tragic lovers as the last act opens, suggesting that they have anxieties about their continued happiness. Portia must carefully circumscribe her marriage with Bassanio to close out Antonio. Gratiano expresses the fear that Nerissa will be unfaithful. There is no ritual celebration. Gratiano, the most hate-filled character in the play, has the last word, and it is a bawdy joke.

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Notes

¹William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. John R. Brown, 7th ed. (1955; rpt. London: Methuen, 1969), II. viii. 23-24. Subsequent quotations from *The Merchant of Venice* are from this edition. Quotations from Shakespeare's other plays are from *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt, 1972).

²In "Shylock: 'Devil Incarnation' or 'Poor Man. . . Wronged?'," *JEGP*, 60 (1961), 1-21, John H. Smith develops this view most fully and cites his predecessors.

³Since Shakespeare created Shylock a Jew, he expected his audience to recognize him as a circumcised man. So associated were Judaism and circumcision in the Elizabethan mind that "Jews" and "the circumcised race" might be used synonymously. In his sermon *De Olivia Evangelica Concio*, on the conversion of a Jew, Jehuda Menda, in 1577, the Puritan preacher John Foxe implored God "to allure the whole remnant of the circumcised Race. . . to be desirous of the same communion" (*A Sermon preached at the Christening of a certaine Jew*, tr. James Bell, London, Christopher Barker, 1578, sig. A1^v). Because circumcision was not required of Christians (*Acts* 15) and was not common medical practice in the sixteenth century, Shylock's circumcision distinguishes him and marks him as "other." Leslie Fiedler links Shylock's "strangeness" to his association with the Old Testament's circumcising and sacrificing father, Abraham (*The Stranger in Shakespeare*, New York: Stein and Day, 1972, pp. 117-27). In Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, Barabas views his circumcision as a sign of his otherness and a source of pride (II. iii. 7-8; II. iii. 213-15, *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1973). Shakespeare and Marlowe both link circumcision with Jews, anti-Christians, villains, dogs. Shakespeare refers to circumcision explicitly only once, in Othello's famous last speech. As Othello commits suicide, he identifies himself with "a malignant and a turbaned Turk": "I took by th' throat the circumcised dog / And smote him—thus" (V. ii. 352-55). The "circumcised dog" is an image not only of barbarism, but also, of castration, as it alludes to a defeated Othello, who has so relinquished his manhood as to commit a heinous and cowardly crime—murdering a defenseless woman, more appallingly, his wife, in her bed.

⁴"Dog" and "cur" are among the words that express strongest contempt in Elizabethan usage. They are, for example, the terms that Shakespeare gives to Lear when he curses the contemptible Oswald: "You whoreson dog, you slave, you cur!" (*Lr.* I. iv. 81-82). Shakespeare depicts the dog as the lowest of the low and describes its fate as to be beaten and abused (*Oth.* III. iii. 358-59; *MND* II. i. 208-210; *Lr.* II. ii. 138-39). Variants on the phrase "I'd have beaten him like a dog" recur (*Cor.* IV. v. 55-56; *TN*, II. iii. 141; *1H4*, III. iii. 91-92; *2H6*, III. i. 171). Both words further imply cowardice. In *Henry V*, for example, the Dauphin advises the King of France to confront the English army: "For coward dogs / Most spend their mouths when what they seem to threaten / Runs far before them" (II. iv. 69-71). In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Caius tells Evans, "By gar, you are de coward, de Jack dog, John ape" (III. i. 78-79). The words may be used, too, to describe a person whose actions are both violent and cowardly. For example, Antony denounces "damned Casca," who "like a cur, *behind* [italics mine] / Struck Caesar on the neck" (*JC* V. i. 43-44). The same idea is implicit when Antonio calls Shylock "cut-throat dog" (I. iii. 106), "cut-throat" suggesting that Shylock acts furtively, as a murderer or assassin would, rather than openly, as, say, a soldier.

⁵Launce, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, underscores the dog's coldness when he says of his dog, Crab, "He is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog" (II. iii. 9-10). The phrases "incharitable dog" (*Tmp.* I. i. 41) and "inhuman dog" (*Tis.* V. iii. 14) occur, and Kent aptly describes Goneril and Regan as Lear's "dog-hearted / daughters" (*Lr.* IV. iii. 47). There are numerous instances of "dog" implying ferocity; see *1H6* I. v. 25; *Oth.* V. ii. 360-61; *2H4* IV. v. 130-32. The mad dog epitomizes raging madness in Edgar's famous catalogue: "hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey" (*Lr.* III. iv. 92-93).

⁶Vincenzio Saviolo, *Vincenzio Saviolo his Practise* (1595; rpt. in *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*, Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimilies & Reprints, 1972), p. 412.

⁷Shylock's age may be discounted as a reason for his failure to respond to Antonio. Though their age difference is unclear, Shylock is older than Antonio. He is referred to as "old" several

times (II. v. 2; IV. 1. 171; IV. ii. 11), and Gratiano makes a bawdy retort that glances at his age (III. i. 32). Though Antonio seems older than Bassanio and his other Venetian companions, he is young enough to be thought in love (I. i. 46) and, therefore, probably in the prime of life. Shylock gives no sense of wanting virility, and except for his status, he might have acted as Shakespeare's other dauntless older men—Kent, Lear, Capulet, Montague. Shakespeare's audience would have had no reason to expect Shylock to be unskilled in the use of arms. Jews who resided in England before their banishment engaged in combat to settle quarrels and served in the army (Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941, p. 122). In Italy, where Elizabethan travelers might have seen Jews, those living in the Venetian ghetto were permitted to carry swords for self-defense when they traveled outside the city. Venetian Jews were apparently combative enough that "it was more than once necessary to issue a proclamation forbidding the Jew to carry arms" (Cecil Roth, *Venice*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1930, pp. 115, 204).

⁸Psychoanalytic critics have always seen Shylock's bond as threatening castration. Using textual and literary evidence, E. Pearlman also argues that interpretation in "Shakespeare, Freud, and the Two Usuries, or, Money's a Meddler," *ELR*, 2 (1972), 226-27.

⁹*MV*, p. 150. Quotations from *Il Pecorone* are from Brown's translation, Appendix I of the Arden edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, cited throughout.

¹⁰Two critics have argued earlier along parallel lines that Antonio and Portia are rivals. John D. Hurrell sees Antonio as Portia's rival in his passionate love for Bassanio, which suggests "an incipient homosexual relationship" (*Studies in Literature and Language*, 3, 1961, 337-40). Lawrence W. Hyman regards Antonio and Portia as mutual rivals for Bassanio and deals specifically with the bond, viewing it as Antonio's attempt to bind Bassanio to him ("The Rival Lovers in *The Merchant of Venice*", *SQ*, 21, 1970, 109-116). Neither sees Shylock as threatening castration with the bond or Antonio as binding Bassanio through guilt in agreeing to it.

¹¹Many read Antonio as so eager to help Bassanio that he fails to understand the implications of Shylock's bargain. Even if one chooses this reading, one must still see Shakespeare's presentation of Antonio as ambivalent. If Antonio loves Bassanio so much that he becomes self-destructive—by giving up a sense of his dignity and losing his awareness of potential evil—then surely his love is called into question.

¹²Most critics, too many to cite, regard Antonio as an exemplar of goodness and generosity. Many simply ignore his treatment of Shylock. Others find ways to rationalize it. Alfred Harbage, for example, writes: "It is hard to imagine anyone so courteously as Antonio spitting at Shylock, but he *seems* [italics mine] to admit the truth of the charge. We must remember that there is a vast difference between seeing such an act and hearing it reported; in the latter instance we tend to dismiss it as a metaphor" (*William Shakespeare: A Reader's Guide*, New York: Farrar, 1963, p. 179). There are frequent appeals to history: e.g. "The contemptuous treatment afforded to Shylock by the Christians, not excluding Antonio, is, of course, to be seen primarily through Elizabethan eyes" (D.A. Traversi, *An Approach to Shakespeare*, 3rd ed. 1956; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1969, I, 197).

¹³See E.E. Krapf, "Shylock and Antonio: A Psychoanalytic Study on Shakespeare and Antisemitism," *The Psychoanalytic Review*, 42 (1955), p. 119 and E. Pearlman, p. 224.

¹⁴*Shakespearean Meanings* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 213.

¹⁵Cf. Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1946), I, 355.

¹⁶*The Jew of Malta's* first recorded performance was in 1592, and there are records of a number of performances in 1594 and 1596 (Marlowe, I, 255). Shakespeare probably wrote *The Merchant of Venice* no earlier than 1596 and no later than 1598 (*The Merchant of Venice*, p. xxvii).

¹⁷Shakespeare associates monkeys with lechery often: for example, Falstaff describes Shallow as "lecherous as a monkey" (2*H4* III. ii. 319) and Iago draws his well-known comparison for Othello, "Were they [Desdemona and Cassio] as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys, / As salt as wolves in pride" (III. iii. 400-401).

¹⁸See Nevill Coghill, "The Basis of Shakespearian Comedy," *E & S*, NS 3 (1950), 22-23 and Barbara K. Lewalski, "Biblical Allusion and Allegory in *The Merchant of Venice*," *SQ*, 13 (1962), 331, 341.

¹⁹Michael Adler, *Jews of Medieval England* (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, 1939), p. 339, Appendix XXVI.

²⁰C.J. Sisson, "A Colony of Jews in Shakespeare's London," *E & S*, 23 (1937), 43.

Shakespeare and Dekker: Creative Interaction and the Form of Romantic Comedy

by Larry S. Champion

Shakespeare's rapid maturation as a comic playwright is a matter of considerable critical record. The early stage pieces—whether primarily derivative of the classical tradition as in *The Comedy of Errors* or of the native tradition as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*—represent the supreme comic achievement on the English stage in the early 1590's. Yet, within a few years Shakespeare is to integrate situational techniques and multiple plots to create in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* an even more delightful commentary on the vagaries of love; and shortly thereafter he will utilize comedy for more complex characterization and more penetrating analyses of the human condition, moving through such plays as *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*, in which characters are comically forced to recognize and accept their true identities as human creatures susceptible to love, to *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure For Measure*, in which a central character falls to sin but is eventually pardoned after experiencing a comic catharsis on the moral level.

Even though Shakespeare's dramatic talents are quite correctly considered unique to his own or any other age, Thomas Dekker's progressive development in comedy provides a striking and significant parallel. If, admittedly, Dekker is not consistently to realize the artistic levels of his more talented contemporary, he, nonetheless, makes remarkable dramatic strides—perhaps as a direct result of his familiarity with Shakespeare's work—between his first loosely constructed efforts, *Old Fortunatus* and *Patient Grissil*, and *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, a situation comedy some two years later than *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that likewise interweaves tonally contrasting multiple plot lines and, in turn, Part II *The Honest Whore*, in which within a year of *Measure For Measure* he too makes comedy a vehicle for exploring the potential transformation of a sinful character when exposed to genuine love and forgiveness.

It must be admitted at the outset that evaluating Dekker's work is doubly difficult because it is so different in kind and quality and because so much of it was written in collaboration. According to the Alfred Harbage-Samuel Schoenbaum count in *Annals of English Drama*, he had a hand in at least fifty-three plays and pageants, of which twenty-six are extant. Of thirty-two comedies, seventeen are extant, and probably only four were written without collaboration. Dekker produced all types in a professional career spanning

more than thirty years—romantic comedy, satire, citizen comedy, tragicomedy, even a comedy-tragedy (as *The Late Murder in White Chapel* is described). And his work is woefully uneven. If occasionally it “ranks with the masterpieces of Elizabethan drama,”¹ it more frequently is branded as loose and disorderly,² careless of form,³ and morally inconsistent.⁴ Dekker himself has been called an assembly-line dramatist⁵ with an “idle, shambling, shifty way of writing”⁶—in Ben Jonson’s words “a dresser of plays about the town here” (*Poetaster*, III. iv. 320).

Despite the acknowledged complexities of collaboration and critical censure, Dekker’s early romantic comedies demonstrably reflect an important pattern of progressive development for both the playwright and the genre. To be sure, nothing in Shakespeare approximates the relative formlessness of *Old Fortunatus*, apparently Dekker’s earliest complete work, in existence in some form by at least 1596 and a remarkable example of native comedy in structural gestation.⁷ The plot itself is composed of the staples of romantic comedy—high adventure, in this case a magic purse that provides an endless supply of coins in the appropriate currency and a hat that miraculously transports its wearer any distance in the mere wink of an eye; a romantic plot, here a fair mistress with multiple rival wooers who court her affection even in the face of disdain and mockery; song and dance; clever repartee built on puns and wit combats; and a wily servant whose verbal antics not infrequently underscore the foolish actions of his social superiors. The settings are as varied as the imagination—Cyprus, Babylon, England—and the fast-paced action is peppered with dramaturgic events that defy logic and captivate the eye with splendidous masque-like scenes.

Totally absent, however, is a perspective which would lend a semblance of artistic and architectonic cohesion.⁸ For one thing, the plot falls into two virtually unrelated halves. Fortunatus receives the magic purse in I, i, and through trickery gains the magic hat from the Turkish emperor in II, i.⁹ But he is dead by II, ii; and, even though his sons Ampedo and Anelocia have previously appeared in the action, the spectator is certainly not prepared for a continuation of the fantastic adventures into the second generation. Moreover, the rival wooing is first introduced, without explanation, as late as Act III. Agripyne, daughter of Athelstane, King of England, is a virtual parody of the courtly mistress, holding each of her lovers in high disdain; nevertheless, she is wooed by the “melancholicke” French prisoner Orleans, who pines in anguish and sprinkles the air with Petrarchan conceits; by the Prince of Cyprus who, though seemingly invulnerable outwardly, secretly yearns for the maiden; and by Anelocia, whom Agripyne and her father encourage in order to find the source of his “golden mine” (III. i. 261), the magic purse he has inherited from his father.

Even more unsettling to the comic spirit than the loosely related halves

is the decidedly uncomic frame established in I, i, in which Fortune ominously determines to practice upon Fortunatus, proclaiming that he shall be one of her "minions" (170). She offers him a choice of wisdom, strength, health, beauty, long life, or riches; yet, when he chooses the last, she denounces him as a "vain couetous foole" who will "repent. . . , dwell with cares and quickly die" (308-12). And in II. ii. accompanied by the three Destinies, she claims his life. Two additional frames, though admittedly more minor, further distort this already problematic perspective. In the "Prologue at Court" two old men, one an Englishman and one a Cypriot, wend their way toward Elizabeth's court. When they suddenly find themselves in the Queen's presence, the Cypriot offers to usher in Fortunatus and his colleagues, who bring in their entertainment "a whole yeeres tribute" (54). A second "Prologue," directly opposing Fortune's dire prediction, announces "*Fortunatus* historie" as "*Loves* sweet war" fought on the "imagined Surface of much land, / Of many kingdomes" (i. 16-17, 24).

The perspective of the play, in a word, is genuinely complex, with five levels of what Bertrand Evans in his Shakespearean studies¹⁰ describes as discrepant awareness—that of the spectators, the two old men with their fictive sense of play, the Prologue announcing the theme of love, the Goddess Fortune with her pronouncement of dire consequences, and Fortunatus himself. The difficulty is that, in terms of the comic perspective, they literally contradict each other. If the tone of Fortunatus' and Andelocia's experience is one of escapist abandon to the marvelous and the fantastic, the tone of Fortune's control of the protagonists is oppressively didactic, even tragic in the sense that Fortune mocks Fortunatus for his choice of gifts and accurately prophesies his miserable end. The interweaving of disparate strands of action is ineffective since the serious plot (the allegorical frame) occupies the controlling perspective and tends to reduce Fortunatus to the level of a petty hedonist permitted his brief day in the sun before confronting inevitable and brutal destruction. The result, a dramaturgical mixture of the allegorical and the naturalistic, is admittedly significant in its reflection of drama still in a transitional stage, but it is confusing to any spectator.

Patient Grissil, Dekker's collaboration with Henry Chettle and William Haughton, to whom Henslowe records payments in 1600, is an altogether more successfully constructed play when considered as a forerunner to mature Elizabethan comedy. It is only a slightly more effective comic achievement, however, illustrating a dramatic failure that results—not like that of *Old Fortunatus* from faulty structure—but from basic characterological flaws in the main plot itself. The central action involves the wedding and testing of Grissil by Gwalter, the Marquess of Salucia. Once Gwalter chooses Grissil, against the advice of those who would prefer a wife of more appropriate social rank, he announces to his man Furio that he will try her patience. And

in a series of progressively harsher maneuvers, he subjects her to taunts and threats that would break the spirit and most certainly destroy the love of a normal woman. The public assertion that he no longer loves her is but the preliminary to forcing her to wait attentively upon his servants and courtiers. Next, her father and brother are banished from Court; subsequently she herself is banished, and Gwalter a short time thereafter seizes from her their newborn twins. The final indignity is that many years later she must return to the Court from her humble dwelling in order to pay homage to his new bride, actually a daughter who has been raised by Gwalter's brother, the Marquess of Pavia. At this point Gwalter reveals the full truth to Grissil and opens his arms anew to a wife whose name shall be registered "in golde" "in the booke of Fame" (V. ii. 208, 297).

Interlaced with this central action are palpably comic strands which both parody and counterpoint. Sir Owen ap Meredith in language somewhere between Welsh and English haltingly woos and wins the widow Gwenthyan in II, i, only to discover her to be a termagant fully capable of countering his every effort to be the dominant marriage partner. By III, ii, he is complaining that her "tung goes lingle, iangle, lingle, iangle, petter and worse than pelles when her house is a fire" (III. ii. 132-33).¹¹ Gwalter, offering to teach Owen how to tame a shrewish wife, gives him three freshly cut osiers and likewise takes three for himself. When Owen offers to use them to whip and chastise Gwenthyan, she seizes them and subjects him to such verbal torrents that he quickly apologizes and agrees that she shall have new clothing and new horses. In a rage, however, when he hears the price of her new rebato, he tears it apart, then is virtually reduced to tears when she in turn rips apart her dowry, a bond worth five thousand ducats. The four scenes depicting this farcical struggle between Owen and Gwenthyan are carefully placed to temper our attitude toward the more serious relationship between Gwalter and Grissil; the humor of the one increases as does the intensity of the other. The scene involving the tearing of the rebato and the bond occurs just after Grissil has been banished from the Court and in ignominy must rejoin her family in poverty, the scene of a feast gone awry (with Gwenthyan serving a banquet to beggars instead of to her husband's guests) follows the forced separation of Grissil from her infant children, and the comic reunion of the blustering lovers occurs mere moments after the serio-comic reconciliation of Gwalter and Grissil.

A different kind of comic contrast is provided by Julia, who—appearing in three scenes—persistently champions the virtues of the single life in her assumption that all marriages are hell; only the battlefronts differ. Besieged by the rival wooers Onophrio, Farneze, and Urcenze, she will have none "die" for her since she serves not "mistress *Venus*" (II. i. 248, 256). Like Shakespeare's Beatrice she insists that the proverb that old maids will lead

apes in hell was "proclaim'd against them that are married upon earth, for to be married is to live in a kinde of hel" (258-59); sweet virginity makes "saints on earth and starres in heaven" (264). She, too, can see a church by daylight; "I deale by marriage as some *Indians* doe the Sunne, adore it, and reverence it, but dare not stare on it, for feare I be starke blinde" (276-78). She advises Sir Owen in the final scene that, if he cannot "be deafe whensoever [Gwenethyan] bawles, and dumbe when [he himself] should brabble" (257-58), then his only recourse is "to buy [his] winding sheet" (260).

Theoretically, then, the comic structure of *Patient Grissil* appears firm. And, of course, contemporary audiences may well have rolled in the aisles. It is unlikely, though, since fundamental problems are not far to seek. Prompted perhaps by *The Taming of the Shrew* written some four years earlier, *Patient Grissil* in many ways is a mirror image of Shakespeare's comedy. Both plays depend upon stylized secondary plots that parody the major action and stock comic servant figures subject to ranting verbal and sometimes physical abuse from their masters. But Shakespeare's comic perspective is much firmer. For one thing, as in *The Comedy of Errors*, he provides additional comic distance through an external framing device in which a lord, returning from his hunting expedition and spying the drunken Sly sprawled in front of an alehouse, determines to "practice on this drunken man" by surrounding him with lavish ornaments and hiring a group of players to perform a shrew story for his benefit. Even though in its present form the action of the Induction is never concluded, quite probably Sly and his attendants are intended to remain on the balcony stage throughout the play to observe the action below. Thus, the scene serves constantly to draw the filter of fiction before us lest we be tempted to forget that Kate is a purely artificial figure of farce and, like many an armchair critic, become indignant that Shakespeare could consider such cruel mistreatment of womankind as comic. For another thing, once we are into the action, the battle of the sexes—envisaged in the main plot through the extremes of the masculine ogre and the professed virago and mirrored in the subplot by fatuous rival wooers—is played out to the spectators' delight as the one-dimensional characters are manipulated like pawns for maximum contentiousness. Petruchio is the same pompous and egocentric ass at the end of the play as he gloats over his wife's obedience and his resultant net gain of two hundred pounds that he was at the beginning when he stalked into Padua beating his servant for misunderstanding him and swearing his intentions to marry wealth. Nor has Kate changed one tittle! To be sure, she no longer flouts her shrewishness before Petruchio. But, far from conquering it, she has merely redirected it for greater effect. The Kate who takes up the cudgels with the widow at the drop of a word in the last act (with Petruchio's encouragement) is the same Kate who strikes verbally at all comers in the opening scene; in the same fashion,

Kate delights in the victory over Bianca which she gains through "obedience" to Petruchio just as she had previously delighted in threatening the younger sister and having her cower in fear.

Dekker's taming theme, by contrast, is set forth in deadly earnest, despite the comic machinery that surrounds it. Never once does Grissil, like Katherina, openly resist her husband's actions or covertly establish the slightest hint of a private level of awareness with the spectators by which they might infer her perception of the struggle as a game of wits that she can play as well as he¹²; nor does Gwalter, like Petruchio, ever puncture the seriousness with moments of frolicking humor. Dekker, in a word, appears to reject stylization and, in doing so, to set his sights on a realistic delineation of the battle of the sexes. The fatal flaw is that, once Dekker commits himself to such a serio-comic pattern and its concomitant credibility of characterization, he fails to provide motivation that is either adequate or consistent. When, for example, he openly chooses the poor maiden Grissil for his bride, he apparently determines that he must prove her worth to his subjects by displaying her fidelity in increasingly severe trials. Yet, at other moments his motive would seem to be psychologically more personal. Although his "love to her is as the heate to fire," he nevertheless is "burnt up with desires, / To trie my Grissils patience" (II. ii. 14, 20-21); "Should I not weepe for joy my heart would breake, / And yet a little more Ile stretch my tryall" (IV. i. 154-55). A more general controlling motif is suggested in the opening scene when, dressed in hunter's livery, Gwalter describes the selection of a wife as a task as difficult as that of a huntsman; but neither the theme nor the analogy is meaningfully pursued. If the controlling principle is intended to be his claim that Grissil's successfully withstanding her trials will enable him to expose false counsellors and sychophants in his court, the end is woefully inadequate to the means; that motif is dismissed at the moment of Grissil's triumph with the incredibly brief comment to the parasites Mario and Lepido, "Arise flatterers get you gone, / Your soules are made of blacke confusion" (V. ii. 209-10). Similarly, his pledge in Act III to teach Owen how to take a wife occurs too late to function as a controlling theme for the spectators; moreover, the idea is never alluded to again until the final scene when he notes that, just as osiers must be bent while green, so he has "tride [his] *Grissils* patience when twas greene" (238). One final possibility—in IV, i, he asserts that he will have found a wonder if Grissil remains constant. If that fatuous observation is intended to provide a rationale for the battery of miseries imposed upon her, one can conclude only that Gwalter is too stupid (or too sadistic) to deserve such a wife.

Dekker's first major success came in *The Shoemakers' Holiday*, for which Henslowe records payment in 1599.¹³ The central plot line traces the uneven course of Roland Lacy's love for Rose Otley, and the blocking figures

(Lacy's uncle and Rose's father) appear to possess the controlling power in the stage world until all is overturned in the final act by a king who rewards treason, even during wartime, with knighthood and who in the name of love flagrantly rebukes two of his prominent countrymen—an Earl and a former Lord Mayor of London. The comic perspective is firm from the beginning, however, the result primarily of the interlacing of three subordinate plot strands. In this regard the play is highly reminiscent of the elaborate structure of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, written presumably some two or three years before. As in that play, no plot line is noteworthy in isolation; but together the diverse strands of action create a quality of festive merriment by juxtaposing artistically enhanced character and social custom with a sense of romantic abandon central to the spirit of the best romantic comedy.¹⁴

While it is obviously impossible to determine the precise extent to which Dekker might have been indebted to Shakespeare's play, fundamental structural similarities minimize the probability of mere coincidental resemblances. Like the Rose-Lacy plot, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sets forth a daughter (Hermia) whose love is blocked by a father (Egeus) insistent on pressing his own preference for a suitor. In both plays any genuine apprehension of serious consequences is mitigated by stylization of this major action. Shakespeare, for example, doubles the young lovers and casts them into a situation in which, under the influence of the juice of a magic flower, they comically deny their sacred vows. When Lysander's and Demetrius' affection for Hermia is transformed into disdain, it is but the prelude to threats of a physical altercation between the short brunette and the tall blonde Helena, to whom the men now swear devotion. Lysander and Demetrius also exchange threats, and the act concludes with all four, unable to locate each other, wandering aimlessly through the forest, yelling insults until they fall asleep from exhaustion. When they awaken the next morning to the sound of Theseus' hunting horn, all romantic confusions are forgotten "as a dream," and the lovers are properly paired.

Similarly, Lacy's perseverance in his affection for Rose—amid threats of disinheritance and arrest from both sides of the older generation—is comically spiced with the linguistic delights of Lacy in disguise as Hans, Simon Eyre's Dutch apprentice, and the frivolities of Rose's maid Sybil, who like Juliet's nurse toys with her mistress when sent to gain news of Lacy. Above all, like the Lysander-Demetrius rivalry, Hammon's pursuit of both Rose and Jane (the wife of Ralph, Hans' co-worker in Eyre's shoe shop) parodies the romantic relationship between Lacy and Rose. Within eighteen lines of first laying eyes on Rose in II, ii, he is voicing his love to her, and within forty-four lines he indicates his desire to take her for a wife. Even more precipitately, Rose's father (after only fourteen lines of conversation with Hammon, in which there is no mention whatsoever of his daughter) determines privately

to arrange a match posthaste. The Lord Mayor's peremptory decision is public by the time we next see him; and, furious that she crosses him and is obstinate, he offers to make her agree if Hammon will have her. In a grandly gallant gesture Hammon abjures "enforced love," but then his gallantry is exploded through his private revelation that his motive is not consideration for Rose but rather attraction to a "wench [who] keeps shop in the old change" (III, i, 51). That he has thrice before courted this nameless wench (III, iv, 3) taints his protestations of consummate affection for Rose, and later the final tarnish comes with his proffer of twenty pounds to buy Jane from her legal husband. The stylized figure of the rival wooer and the paternal blocking figure comically mock conventions at the heart of romantic comedy, as does the hyperbolic language of the lover (the gentleman hunter), perhaps more laughable in its artificiality than Hans' broken English.¹⁵

As noted earlier, three subordinate plots interact directly to form the rich comic perspective in both plays. The confused affairs of Shakespeare's Athenian lovers are counterpointed by the estranged supernatural lovers Titania and Oberon, who have come to Athens to grace the wedding of their favorite mortals Theseus and Hippolyta. The magic flower that plays such havoc with the humans is, indeed, introduced by the Fairy King as a means of gaining control over his fretful Queen. The intervention of the deities to manipulate the mortal affairs of the heart is, of course, corollary to the solution of their own quarrel. In his own strange way, the ass-headed Bottom becomes a parodic rival wooer for Titania, thereby rendering the estrangement of the fairies all the more ridiculous. Admittedly, the emphasis of the play both for them and for the mortals is reconciliation. Appropriately, following his command to Puck to correct the youngsters' confusions, Oberon delivers the final words of the play, a blessing on the multiple wedding and a prophecy that their issue "Ever shall be fortunate" (V. i. 413). But, along the way, we have gained a brief glimpse of the nuances of male domination and been reminded of the vagaries of love beyond the blissful moment of youthful infatuation. Ralph's adventures in Dekker's play provide a similar darkening coloration. Like Lacy, Ralph faces a separation from his new love imposed by military obligations. Unlike Lacy, however, who refuses either to fight or to be separated from Rose only to be wondrously rewarded with both knighthood and marriage, Ralph does go to the wars in France, where he not only suffers a crippling injury but very nearly loses both life and wife.¹⁶ The plot line is comically stylized, to be sure, with the unlikely love token of a pair of shoes serving as Ralph's means of re-locating Jane and with Hammon's wedding plans foiled at the very door of the church itself by a properly incensed husband—and moments later with the reunited Ralph and Jane absurdly mistaken for the main plot's romantic pair by Lincoln and Otley, bent on preventing the wedding. A heavy layer of bawdiness also peppers the

scenes. Firke, for example, on several occasions praises Ralph as a good "workman at a pricke" and Jane as one who "shal be laid" and "occupied" (I. i. 142-43). In a word, while Ralph's adventures obviously heighten the comedy, they also enrich the experience of the play for the spectators who perceive more than a touch of irony in the war-maimed cripple's being mistaken for a healthy war-evading Lacy feigning a limp to solemnize his nuptials.

A second subordinate plot in each case broadens the social focus to include the workaday world in rollicking action carefully interwoven with the main plot to offset any potential infringement upon the tone of high comedy. Through Bottom and his associates Shakespeare is obviously burlesquing his own profession—in the play they produce (*The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*), utterly inappropriate in tone and title if not in theme; in the ridiculous casting, with Bottom demanding every role and Flute embarrassed at having a female part; in the pompous manner of delivery, combined with actors who confuse actual lines with cues; in the endless death scene in which the protagonist loses more breath than blood, and the doggerel rhythm certain to turn the most serious of themes to laughter. More specifically, the handicraftsmen appear five times in the play, their action in each instance directly related to the misadventures of the Athenian youth. In the first appearance (I. ii.) just after Helena determines to prevent Hermia's and Lysander's elopement, the handicraftsmen sharpen the comic edge through their bumbling casting scene. Their next two appearances burlesque the harried romantic confusions; Bottom's "transfiguration" with an ass's head (III. i.) occurs at the moment Helena suddenly finds herself adored by the two men who previously disdained her, and his recovery in IV. i. which leaves him with a dream he had rather not recall and Titania exclaiming "Methought I was enamour'd of a ass" (80), farcically anticipates the lovers' reconciliation that is to occur later in the scene. Their final action, involving performance of a playlet as entertainment for the wedding party, is replete with malapropisms, interpolated conversation with the audience, and ad-libbing; coupled with the high seriousness of the Pyramus and Thisbe legend, it creates a travesty of the tribulations of youthful passion and provides a hilarious capstone comment on the major theme of the play.

The analogous strand in *The Shoemakers' Holiday* deals with the meteoric rise of the master craftsman Simon Eyre to material wealth and political fame. Impulsive, good-natured almost to a fault, loquaciously spouting the merits of the gentle craft, verbally bantering with his journeyman, occasionally dressing down his wife with an almost incredible volubility, Simon is wed to a comic caricature of the parvenu, nagging wife whose disdain for her common roots renders her social aspirations and her affected mannerisms all the more laughable.¹⁷ And, like Shakespeare, Dekker interweaves this action to maintain a fundamentally comic perspective even

while creating a theatrical experience that is more than the froth of fancy and romantic abandon. The major plot line includes three specific points at which the seriousness of the action threatens to blur the comic vision—III, i-ii, in which Lincoln discovers Lacy's absence from the battlefield in France and Otley determines, at worst, to force Rose to marry Hammon or, at best, to send her to virtual imprisonment at Old Ford; IV, iv, in which the two authority figures plan and execute their plot physically to bar the wedding of Rose and Lacy; and V, v, in which they are jointly determined to annul it by appeal to the highest legal authority. On each of these occasions, the surrounding material maintains a balanced perspective. In the third act, for example, Lincoln's and Otley's actions are insulated by stages of Eyre's incredible success, the arrangement of an opportunistic purchase of a ship's cargo effected in large part through his disguise as an alderman in II, iii, and his selection as sheriff of London in III, ii; in both instances Margery's social pretensions and affectations are at their peak. Similarly, in Act IV comic reinforcement comes through anticipation in Scene i of Simon's becoming Lord Mayor at any moment and in Scene iv through Firke, who like Puck, consciously tightens the web of confusion to the breaking point by directing Lincoln and Otley to the wrong wedding.

Both plays also provide in a third subordinate strand a *deus ex machina* figure who manipulates a happy, if unlikely, resolution before serious apprehension can develop. Theseus, refusing to believe that the lovers' tales are more than fabrications of the passionate mind, passes tolerant and romantic judgment upon the Athenian quartet and their dreams, overruling Hermia's father's objections and joining the weddings of the properly paired couples to his own. And King Henry in the spirit of "Saint Hughs Holiday" overrules both father and uncle, proclaiming Lacy's pardon, acknowledging Rose as "young, well born, fair, virtuous, / A worthy bride" (V, v, 116-17), and blessing the union by knighting the groom.¹⁸

Dekker's plot lines, in a word, are expertly interwoven; in combination they create a comic statement about romantic love—its trials and tribulations, its excesses, its costs and potential destructiveness, its victories and reconciling qualities.¹⁹ Admittedly, Lincoln and Otley are begrudgingly quieted only because they have no recourse; Ralph's body will never be whole again; Hammon presumably must live at least for a time without love. Even so, the spectators' response has been carefully and consistently controlled from the opening line, and the thematic impact of the play affirms, without fictionally abstracting, the restorative qualities of love both for society and for the individual. The characters, like those of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, are static; and the humor is situational, arising primarily from their external manipulation rather than from any dynamic internal qualities. Yet, largely because of the manner in which the various plot strands interact and enrich

each other, *The Shoemakers' Holiday*—like Shakespeare's play earlier—possesses a degree of universality that sets it apart from other romantic comedies of the period. Observing the interplay of multiple actions from an omniscient perspective, the spectators enjoy the action more fully as a consequence of their privileged information and at the same time develop a certain cast of mind through which to anticipate future conflicts and plot directions. Their active role is crucial in that both playwrights depend upon the perception of the audience to gauge the depth and vitality of the comic vision.

In the early years of the seventeenth century, when satiric city comedy captures London's dramatic fancy—and presumably in the very years he in collaboration with Webster is following the fashionable trend in *Westward Ho* and *Northward Ho*—Dekker, like Shakespeare, also carries the development of romantic comedy to its richest achievement. Part I *The Honest Whore* (1604) and Part II *The Honest Whore* (1605), like *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure For Measure*, involve not the stylized, one-dimensional puppets of situation comedy, but rather the complex characters who are forced to confront a viable force of evil and to make ethical and moral decisions and who—in the course of the action—experience a credible and significant development; struggling on the fringe of comedy, these figures must cope with the actual consequences of crime and sin.²⁰ In Part I the structure is loose, the effect relatively disorderly. With the spectators' perspective at times unguided and consequently blurred and with critical character inconsistencies, the action at several points degenerates into sheer melodrama. In Part II, on the other hand, the structure is firm, the comic perspective carefully controlled throughout; the result is a stage world in which, from a position of knowledgeable security, the spectator observes the development of characters obsessed with greed and lust but ultimately purged and presumably restored to a richer life through the power of love.

Part II shares intriguing similarities with *Measure For Measure*, which was acted in December, 1604, apparently between the writing of Part I and Part II. Both Shakespeare's play and Part II *The Honest Whore* depict a young woman willing to strain the quality of mercy in begging for a man who has grossly wronged her. Both involve a young man of political position whose reputation is sorely tarnished by hypocrisy and moral degeneracy but who is ultimately regenerated through sacrificial selflessness. Both also involve a betrothal or marriage temporarily estranged by a man whose venture into crime threatens literally to destroy him. Even more significant are the structural similarities. Both comedies depict a benevolent *deus ex machina* figure of power and authority who in disguise manipulates the action in order to send several individuals through a series of moral tests and thereby provide the therapy by which to nourish, in the women, the forgiving

grace of selfless love and, in the men, the shame and repentance that will save them from themselves as well as from the law. Both, moreover, utilize a subplot featuring a prostitute and pander which sardonically parodies the principal action. It is not unlikely that through *Measure For Measure* Dekker realized the greater comic possibilities in material involving the repentance and conversion of a notorious prostitute (and the result of such a conversion on the surrounding characters) and was encouraged to create the sequel. Orlando is indeed a more firmly conceived comic controller than Vincentio, though Shakespeare's characters are admittedly more profound. In any case, Dekker in Part II produces a play excellent in structure and firm in characterization and, in this comic vision of the transforming power of human love, achieves his most substantial work.

Despite, then, a number of failures, in some instances the consequence of haste and carelessness, Dekker was on other occasions a more conscious craftsman than many critics have been willing to acknowledge. A part of that craftsmanship most surely was the talent to reshape material, whether in response to his own instincts and "maturing genius,"²¹ as in the transforming of the abortive tragedy *The Noble Spanish Soldier* into the firmly developed tragicomedy *The Welsh Ambassador*, or in response to the achievements of contemporary playwrights, as in Jonson's influence through *Eastward Ho* on *Northward Ho*.²² Certainly his early romantic comedies provide the best evidence that he profited from the work of Shakespeare as well and that the creative process of his richest work is most fully understood in the context of such creative interaction.

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Notes

¹A.H. Bullen, "Thomas Dekker," *DNB* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1917), V, 750.

²C.F. Tucker Brooke, "The Renaissance," in *A Literary History of England*, ed. A.C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1948), p. 541. See also T.M. Parrott and R.H. Ball, *A Short View of Elizabethan Drama* (New York: Scribner's, 1943), p. 107.

³Una Ellis-Fermor, *The Jacobean Drama* (London: Methuen, 1936), p. 118; F.E. Pierce, *The Collaboration of Webster and Dekker* (New York: Holt, 1909), p. 118.

⁴M.C. Bradbrook, *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1955), p. 125.

⁵Arthur Brown, "Citizen Comedy and Domestic Drama," in *Jacobean Theatre*, ed. J.R. Brown and B. Harris (London: Arnold, 1960), p. 63. His art "does not develop; it fluctuates with the demands of his audience" (Normand Berlin, *The Base String: The Underworld in Elizabethan Drama* [Cranberry, N.J.: Farleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1967], p. 12).

⁶A.C. Swinburne, *Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Harper, 1908), p. 67. If his carelessness is "due in part at least to the conditions under which he wrote" (Kate L. Gregg, *Thomas Dekker: A Study in Economic and Social Backgrounds* [Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1924], p. 72), his plays with few exceptions are "uniformly dull, and the attention they require—the sheer effort to

keep one's eyes on the page—is out of all proportion to the reward" (L.C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* [New York: Stewart, 1936], p. 228).

⁷That it was originally a two-part play is implied by Henslowe's reference in 1596 to a revival of the *First Part of Fortunatus*. In November, 1599, Henslowe paid Dekker £6 for "the hole history of Fortunatus" (presumably a combination of the two), and in December the playwright received £2 "for the eande of Fortewnatus for the corte." Cyrus Hoy suggests that Part II may never have been written; in such a case Dekker might simply have revised and condensed the existing part and added the remainder (*Introductions, Notes, and Commentaries to Texts in The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. Fredson Bowers, I [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980], 71). W.L. Halstead, on the basis of style, identifies several portions of the play as pre-Dekker ("Surviving Original Materials in *Old Fortunatus*," *N&Q*, 182 [1942], 30-31).

⁸The linear construction (Marie Therese Jones-Davies, *Un Peintre de la vie londonienne: Thomas Dekker* [Paris: Didier, 1958], II, 173) produces "a continuous effect of surprise" (James H. Conover, *Thomas Dekker: An Analysis of Dramatic Structure* [The Hague: Mouton, 1969], p. 57); "there is neither consistency of tone nor of feeling" (J.W. Ashton, "Dekker's Use of Folklore in *Old Fortunatus*, *If This Be Not a Good Play*, and *The Wisch of Edmonton*," *PQ*, 41 [1962], 241). George R. Price describes the play as "insistently a morality play... in an awkward state of change" (*Thomas Dekker* [New York: Twayne, 1969], p. 48). Sympathetic critics have wisely chosen to dwell on other aspects of the play—its "fresh childlike joy in the marvelous" (Mary Leland Hunt, *Thomas Dekker: A Study* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1911], p. 35), its poetic quality (Ernest Rhys, ed., *Thomas Dekker* [London: Vizetelly, 1887], p. xvi), its effective stylistic use of rhetorical theory (Suzanne Blow, *Rhetoric in the Plays of Thomas Dekker* [Salzburg: Institut für englische sprache und literatur, 1972], p. 13).

⁹The act-scene divisions are supplied by Fredson Bowers, to whose edition (*The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1953-61]) all subsequent citations from Dekker's plays refer.

¹⁰*Shakespeare's Comedies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960) and *Shakespeare's Tragic Practice* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979).

¹¹Both W.L. Halstead ("Collaboration on *Patient Grissil*," *PQ*, 18 [1939], 384) and David M. Greene ("The Welsh Characters in *Patient Grissil*," *Boston Univ. Studies in English*, 4 [1960], 173) demonstrate that the passages are carefully developed "either to imitate fairly exactly a real spoken dialect, or to create a synthetic one on sound linguistic principles."

¹²Gamaliel Bradford's argument that Grissil's unreasonable patience is understandable because it is motivated by a "proud sense of the dignity of her own virtue" ("The Women of Dekker," *Sewanee Review*, 33 [1925], 287) is sadly unconvincing. More plausible is the theory that it reflects a persistent, if muted, strain of social criticism in the play (David G. Hale, "Dekker and the Body Politic," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 67 [1966], 133).

¹³"One of the few universally prescribed and tolerated Elizabethan plays" (Peter Ure, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama*, ed. J.C. Maxwell [Liverpool: Liverpool Univ. Press, 1974], p. 188), *The Shoemakers' Holiday* is a "jocular, back-slapping patriotic piece" (D.J. Enright, "Elizabethan and Jacobean Comedy," in *The Age of Shakespeare*, Vol. II of *The Pelican Guide to English Literature* [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955], p. 419).

¹⁴The description of the structure as "the loose 'chronicle' type" (C.F. Tucker Brooke and Nathaniel B. Paradise, eds., *English Drama 1580-1642* [Boston: Heath, 1933], p. 264) misses the mark badly. More to the point, Richard Levin observes that the triple plots based on class structure provide both the frame and the subject matter (*The Multiple Plot in English Renaissance Drama* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1971], p. 59). Each plot "takes up one form of love and demonstrates how, when it is sincere, it triumphs over adversity" (Frederick M. Burelbach, Jr., "War and Peace in *The Shoemakers' Holiday*," *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, 13 [1968], 102).

¹⁵See Donald S. McClure, "Versification and Master Hammon in *The Shoemakers' Holiday*," *Studies in the Humanities*, 1 (1969), 50-54.

¹⁶His return as a cripple is a "sobering moment of actuality" (Peggy Faye Shirley, *Serious and Tragic Elements in the Comedy of Thomas Dekker* [Salzburg: Universität Salzburg, 1975], p. 25) "quietly but poignantly mirroring the inequality of class privileges" (Hoy, I, 14).

¹⁷"A veritable Father Christmas, a shrewd exploiter of his own egocentricities" (Alfred Harbage, "The Mystery of Perkin Warbeck," in *Studies in the English Romantic Drama*, ed. Josephine Waters Bennett, Oscar Cargill, and Vernon Hall [New York: New York Univ. Press, 1959], p. 137), Eyre in his lifestyle reflects the gain of money without loss of the joy of life (Robert P. Adams, *A Companion to Shakespeare: The Non-Shakespearean Elizabethan Drama: An Introduction* [Washington: Univ. Press of America, 1978], p. 20); he is a mixture of generosity and realism (J.B. Steane, ed., *The Shoemakers' Holiday* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1965], p. 16).

¹⁸Historically Henry VI but spiritually Henry V (Paul C. Davies, ed., *The Shoemakers' Holiday* [Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1968], p. 4), the King like Prince Hal embodies both "the courtier's world of honor and the commoner's pragmatic world" (Michael Manheim, "The Construction of *The Shoemakers' Holiday*," *SEL*, [1970], 322).

¹⁹A "festival of equivocation" (Arthur Kinney, "Thomas Dekker's *Twelfth Night*," *UTQ*, 41 [1971-1972], 63), the play "bristle[s] with moral ambiguities" (Joel H. Kaplan, "Virtue's Holiday: Thomas Dekker and Simon Eyre," *Renaissance Drama*, NS 2 [1969], 103). Revealing that the "deficiencies of various social levels are symptomatic of enduring human faults" (Harold E. Toliver, "*The Shoemakers' Holiday*: Theme and Image," *Boston Univ. Studies in English*, 5 [1961], 208), Dekker "creates a grim world and encourages us to pretend that it is a green one" (Peter Mortenson, "The Economics of Joy in *The Shoemakers' Holiday*," *SEL*, 16 [1976], 252).

²⁰For a full analysis of the structure of the two plays see my "From Melodrama to Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Perspective in Dekker's *The Honest Whore, Parts I-II*," *SP*, 69 (1972), 192-209.

²¹Hazelton Spencer, ed., *Elizabethan Plays* (Boston: Heath, 1933), p. 668.

²²See my "Westward--Northward: Structural Development in Dekker's *Ho Plays*," *Comparative Drama*, 16 (1982), 251-66.

From the Street to the Stage: Pageantry in the History Plays

by Frances Dodson Rhome

Shakespeare was a mere two years old on the occasion of the 1566 London Lord Mayor's Show, and four at the time of the great pageant of 1568 complimenting both the mayor and the royal sovereign. Although chances of his presence on either occasion are remote, he undoubtedly was subject to discussions of those celebrations. In his early twenties in 1584 and 1588, however, he personally may have witnessed one or both of George Peele's spectacular pageants and thrilled with an enthusiastic and cheering crowd to the sweep of decorated barges, distinctive allegorical figures in symbolic garb, colorful emblematic decor, and staged tableaux at city arches accompanied by gracious poetical and moving rhetorical speeches. Surely, newly arrived in London as he was from Stratford, Shakespeare knew of John Allot's remarkable 1590 Lord Mayor's Show celebrating renowned personages and events from actual English history. He possibly may have witnessed Queen Elizabeth's progress in 1593 to Audley End on Avon River so near his home. Without a doubt his creative and dramatic instincts reacted to such street pageantry as he began to compose his own history plays.

Pageantry in the Streets

The same year of *The Comedy of Errors*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Love's Labor's Lost* occasioned Queen Elizabeth's 1591 Great Progress to Elvetham. The entertainment, "Descensus Astrae" written by George Peele, honored William Webbe but primarily lauded Elizabeth as an exemplary monarch. Stemming from great national fervor and civic growth, this and other processional street pageants contained dramatic elements and revealed theatrical techniques of great popular moment to the engrossed crowds, massed along the way and near the city gates. Pomp and circumstance of the most spectacular variety marked the thrilling occasions: decorated settings of arches, structured background walls, "heavenly gardens," a significantly towered globe of the world, brilliantly colored regal and symbolic costuming, shrill whiffles and rhythmical pounding of snare drums, mechanical devices for lowering angels and enfolding actors, recitative of poetic speeches, and the rich spectacle and sense of a grand momentous occasion. Great national themes stressed praise of the royal Elizabeth, a need for preservation of sanctity and security of the commonwealth, the desire for union of warring houses, and challenges to

peace. Tableaux not only displayed virtues required for such preservation but manifested the national wondrous power of the sovereign and the immortality of her citizens to be gained through brave and virtuous deeds. The spectacles cheered the citizenry—and Her Majesty!

Such pageantry set valuable precedence for civic drama, particularly, since several pageants came from the creative pens of Shakespeare's fellow dramatists drawing also on resources of classical, mythical, and popular materials. At this explosive period of dramatic development, all forces of classical conventions, pagan and medieval festivals, mummers' and lord mayor's shows, and calendared holiday carnivals were merging to give impetus to powerful dramatic impulses. Little wonder that Shakespeare, spongily absorbing all these forces, should bring them together in his plays.

In that period of strong national fervor, Shakespeare's three parts of *Henry VI*, *Richard II* and *III*, *King John*, the two plays of *Henry IV* did not accidentally spring to the boards between 1592-1598 anymore than Greene's *James IV* or Marlowe's *Edward III*. The chronicle play itself—some eighty surviving from the period 1590 to 1600—followed those patriotic tastes and glorified England in drama. Reasons for this popularity are clear enough: the annihilated Spanish Armada brought a great wave of nationalism, poets sang of majestic England, historians turned to English traditions and glorified the empire, and peace reigned. Even more importantly from a dramatic consideration, the populace responded enthusiastically to a partially familiar form of drama, having participated in festive public ceremonies of monarchical processional and carnival. Crowds therefore poured into the public playhouse to renew their pleasures in the dramatic, staged presentations.

But what pageant-like devices actually can be identified in Shakespeare's historical dramas as possible transferrals from pageantry? The device of the Globe, abstractions of the Virtues, and mythic personages translate into speech after speech, thematically and metaphorically. A decorated barge on muddy Thames may have sparked the brilliant shimmering description of Cleopatra's on the Nile. Astrae with her sheephook relates to *Richard II*'s dramatic Good-King-Shepherd posturing. Praises of London, though poetically adorned, possibly tweaked the creative intellect of the masterful author of "this scept'red isle."

Those dramatic devices could as easily have derived, however, from other sources. And, undoubtedly were. The impact, nevertheless, of those street pageants and civic celebrations cannot be pushed aside. Too many similarities abound. That 1590 processional of historical figures and previous kings recall Macbeth's imagined stalking ghostly parade. The Schoolmaster Rombus in the 1578 Wamstead pageant written by Sydney mirrors an earlier pedant, Holofernes, in *Love's Labor's Lost*, suggesting a

speculative give-and-take between playwrights. And certainly the 1611 pageant of Anthony Munday contains a resurrection scene remarkably similar to that in *The Winter's Tale*. Children's voices, once heard in pageants calling for virtue and security from their noble sovereign, echo in *Macbeth* and in *Richard III*. The Garden metaphor of the flourishing state described in the first printed text of the Great Progress and Royal Entry of Queen Elizabeth thematically dominates *Richard II*. Dumb-shows, an important element of street tableaux, became affairs of pure spectacle on the stage platform. Speech after speech alludes to abstractions of Time, Fame, and Honor; defeat of "Feeble Policy" instructs *Richard II*; challenge to peace by Ambition reappears in Cade's rabble rebellion in *Henry VI*. Historical consciousness of the White and Red Roses and Union of York and Lancaster tableaued in the 1578 pageant leap dramatically to life in Shakespeare's history plays. *Henry V* regally places its king central in a pageant of spectacle.

Shakespeare's History Plays

Shakespeare grasped the power to satisfy the imaginative hunger of the people with nourishing poetry and dramatic roles molded in a popular mode of audience rapport. As Muriel Bradbrook suggests, the English history play must have been one means of unifying the spectators and creating an audience out of the throng.¹ In the early English dramas, live actors differed little from those in a tableau with set gestures and countenance. But in Shakespeare's histories, even in his earlier more static efforts, real life persons appeared and moved the "show" into the sphere of the "play." Audiences responded emotionally and identified dramatically in a new way, not as compliment or entertainment, but as persons absorbed by and lost within the action. This dramatic interplay between actor and audience achieved by Shakespeare evolved as his history plays themselves developed dramatically and moved away from the more static pageant impulse.

Each history play of Shakespeare, through the combined presentational style of civic pageantry and public drama, defines specific scenes and acts, effects the dramatic moment, provides visioned wonders, and accents thematic and structural developments. The vision of the royal pageant of monarchy itself informs the structure and subject. The dramatic procession, in addition to bringing characters on and off stage, provides an important tool for dramatic contrast—muted in one scene, sweeping in another, straggling in still a third. Through tableaux and dumbshow, moral or ethical considerations or mirrored unspoken thoughts of conscience and of plotting become apparent. Settings of gardens, city gates and walls and the street readily adapt to hierarchical levels of characters from court, bourgeoisie, or commoner.

Like a mannequin parade, cast members in striking costume and sparkling accessories paraded in solemn march. Such magnificent playing apparel made the actors common symbols of the distance separating appearance and reality in Elizabethan and Tudor society. Plays open and close often with fanfares and gala entries of colorfully garbed players. But, as frequently, dramatic grouped entrances evoke an atmosphere of more weighty moment. *Henry VI*, Part One, begins with a muted funeral parade of soldiers and muffled drums; Part Two, the grand and joyous welcome of Queen Margaret to the British Court; and Part Three with a more solemn entry of the king and his advisors to Parliament. *Richard III*, after a brief and moody solo entry, begins dramatically with the funeral parade and grieving, tense Anne. In *Richard II* the processional flourish evolves into an intense trial or *debat*, moves to the ceremonial Tournament Lists at Coventry, and provides the setting of great Westminster for a ceremonious un-crowning pageant. On the other hand, *Henry IV*, Part Two comes to its dramatic climax in Hal's Coronational Procession on a crowded street and the shocking denunciation of Falstaff. But for sheer grandeur and excitement, can anything match the great military entry of *Henry V* before Harfleur with scaling ladder and majestic oration? Or the spectacle itself of this great pageant drama?

Not all pageant elements are exciting and colorful. *Richard III* offers a ritualistic scene of crucifixion accented by religious motif and moral inference. Three female choral figures intone ritualistic incantations preceding a Devil's tempting scene when Richard seeks Elizabeth's daughter's hand. The final act occurring on the religiously festive All Soul's Day carries every element of high pageant: an execution, parade of ghosts, Richard's visual dream, Richmond's stirring orations on battle eve, and the "Real Peace" and "Divine" plans of future *Henry VII* sacramentally sealed in the union of roses.

That Shakespeare viewed the sweep of history as a regally tapestried pageant can be gleaned from his own statements. In *As You Like It*, Duke Senior pointedly comments;

This wide and universal theater
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in. . . (II. vii. 137-9)

and Jacques replies, "All the world's a stage." In *Richard III* Queen Margaret describes her historic role as

The presentation of but what I was,
The flattering index of a direful pageant,
One heaved a-high to be hurled down below. (IV. iv. 84-85)

And King Henry IV sees himself in the same light:

All these bold fears
Thou see'st with peril I have answered,
For all my reign hath been but as a scene
Acting that argument. (Part II, IV. v. 196-198)

To which his son in *Henry V* seems to respond:

And what have kings that privates have not too,
Save ceremony, Save general ceremony? . . .
O Ceremony, show me but thy worth.
(IV. i. 235-6, 239)

Shakespeare's histories, in turn, become a worldly drama.

Henry VI as Pageantry

Of the histories, the three parts of *Henry VI* link most specifically—thematically, structurally, dramatically—to a Royal Processional or Civic Pageant in its majestic entirety. Although written in the same period as the Plautine *Comedy of Errors*, the classically sophisticated and Lyly-like *Love's Labor's Lost*, and the more romantic *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the form and style of *Henry VI* differ significantly in its dramatic characteristics. Its modified and newer impulse relates directly to street pageantry.

Although following closely *The Famous Contention between the Two Houses of York and Lancaster* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, Shakespeare creates a chronicle play adhering to the ceremonious tastes of the time. For a populace which responded clamorously and enthusiastically to festive public ceremonies, his dramatic history plays were designed to draw carpenters, cobblers, draymen, oyster wenches, nobles, matrons, and shopkeepers into the public playhouse. All three parts of *Henry VI* must be taken together for unity of effect; the theme is simple and continuous. But inasmuch as the drama unfolds in three parts to be played in three days, the suggestion arises of a possible festival drama. When considered as a drama-pageant, a new perspective of an artistic and aesthetic expression appears. It is possible that Shakespeare, drawing on all the sources of the world about him, viewed in his creative mind's eye this initial chronicle as a dramatic pageant.

Common characteristics of the Lord Mayor's Shows and street pageants reappear: processional entrances, rhetorical addresses, ritual and ceremony, allegorical personification and abstraction, praise for the royal sovereign, street settings, and emblematic and symbolic devices. *Part One* most closely resembles those colorful sixteenth-century welcoming pageants performed on crowded streets before ornately decorated city arches and gates.

Coronation and "deknighting" scenes, processional entrances, trumpets and flourishes, and city gate settings embellish the plays' action. Alternative posits of the ideal Talbot and the demonic Joan instill, in national terms, the plight of noble England under the fearful threat of ignoble France. When Talbot tears the garter from Sir Falstofe, a traditional rite of degradation becomes the source of ceremony.² England's redemption by her pious king and his loyal supporters thematically turns the drama into a great pageant on the moral causes and consequences of political order.

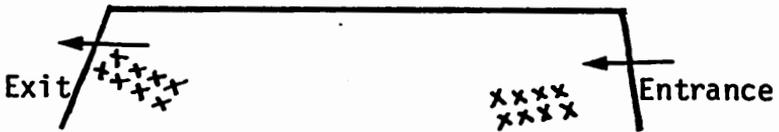
Part One is filled with dramatic devices familiar to civic pageantry. In that play of twenty-seven scenes or spectacular moments, eight occur before city gates or "on the walls," eleven are "on the plains." The remaining few scenes occur in a castle, the Temple Garden, a Parliament House and two palaces. Within each of the five acts a pageant presentational directs the action: one faction performs cowardly acts whereas the other bravely clings together and enacts valiant deeds, thereby demonstrating "true" ethical and noble virtues. Punctuated with drums, sounded alarums, and exemplary heroic acts, speeches of loyalty to the king's cause add an emphatic, dramatic, and declamatory staccato. The antic of Death, a vision of Peace, a horror of "Discord" and Fraud—all are imaged so as to accent and personify the theme allegorically.

In contrasting scenes of parallel situation Talbot and the English lose first to the victorious and jubilant French, suffer rebellion and division, and experience disunity and deterioration even as the Dauphin's forces gain strength and poise. Protagonists' roles reverse in a staggered series of episodic scenes. The English regroup climactically to rout the "evil" French. The British sovereign sues for peace and secures the truce in an exemplum of noble ethical behavior. Whereas popular street pageants praised the remarkable virtues of the royal sovereign, Shakespeare's king is a partial man and a partial monarch, too weak to command undivided loyalty. He ironically defeats one opposing French woman only to make another his Queen. This undercut sovereign's strong role impinges dramatically upon a sixteenth-century audience steeped in customary praise of a beloved Elizabeth. The theme, rapier-like, thrusts home.

Problems in Directing

Henry VI, particularly *Part One*, challenges the technical skills of directors who attempt to stage the series of episodic scenes with some modicum of motivated entrances and exits. Short scenes involving different characters in seemingly unrelated action and divergent settings follow in rapid succession. As with all Elizabethan and Shakespearean drama, that "flat" moment of one group's exit prior to subsequent characters' entrances momentarily stops the flow of dramatic events and isolates certain

climactic moments from the tense, developing intrigue. The audience often loses awareness or intensity, or worse, the import of the episode, in shifting to a new unfolding event, as witness:

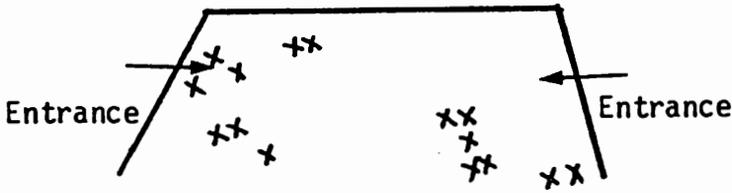


No amount of trumpets, rushed entrances with rapidly spoken lines, or dramatically swished robes and clanged tympany will sustain the dramatic interest. The impact of the retiring group also may be lessened. Note the difficulties in Act One.

A funeral march in a muted processional opens scene one. Three messengers bring sad tidings of slaughter, of the Dauphin's growing strength, and of Talbot's imprisonment. To meet the crisis each of the English nobles "hath his place and function to attend," but one is "left out," causing Winchester's determined vow to "steal and sit at chiefest stern of public weal." By way of contrast, scene two opens with a flourishing victory march for the French who also suffer a noted change of fortune but gain hope from a "Holy Maid" whose "Glory is like a circle in the water," promising the "English circle" to be near at end. A woeful procession followed by a clamorous and glittering march visually dramatizes protagonists, antagonists, and dramatic conflict. One discouraging group straggling off-stage accents the victorious element's entrance. So far so good! The audience knows now the basic factions and divisions of the conflict.

The conflict heightens in scenes three and four. A reversal occurs, however, as Gloucester is forced to rush the Tower Gates to the cry, "Open the gates unto the Lord Protector," and meets Winchester in "tumultuous strife" and open conflict within the English ranks. In Orleans before the walls' turrets, on the other hand, Talbot in scene four skirmishes at the north gate, loses Salisbury and Gargrave; the French and Joan approach as "a great power," and Talbot vows "to avenge" Salisbury's loss. Scenes five and six present clashing skirmishes between Talbot, the Dauphin, Joan, and the English, culminating in Joan's rescue of "Orleans from the English." Joan, the "Divinest" creature, "Astrea's daughter," consequently gains half the realm as "France's saint." Victorious shouts and flourishes conclude the act!

In six scenes numerous functionaries, therefore, must be conducted on and off by the director. Observe what may occur if these scenes become *tableaux vivant* before two settings on the one stage:



Following the dramatic entrance-processionals, the short staccato scenes permit one faction to remain "frozen" in tableau-postured grouping while the other performs, in the same mannered performance of tableaux before city gates enacted for an approaching royal processional. When presented in such a fashion, the act—and for that matter the entire play—falls into a neatly patterned pageant. Did Shakespeare so envision his art? One cannot say, but certainly the structured episodic scenes lead one to conjure that his creative "eye" saw the staging even as he wrote the scene.

The remaining acts of the drama carry similar pageantry and triumph of ceremony. A remarkable opening of Act II—drums beating a "dead march," and the scraping sound of scaling ladders, and raucous calls of "crowd"—marks also a "failed watch" and shameful surprise. "Brave Talbot" affirms, "God is our fortress in whose conquering name / Let us resolve to scale their flinty bulwark" (II. i. 25), when French forces are "scattered and dispersed." The quieter and contrasting emblematic scene of the Temple Garden suggests conflicting factions through the ceremonial ritual of plucking a rose; thus, the conflict of Lancaster and York emerges. Metaphoric action thereby combines with vividly realistic portrayal of angry quarrelers: "I pluck this white rose with Plantagenet. / I pluck this red rose with young Somerset" (iv. 35-6). Equally emblematic in the tower is dying Mortimer's declaration of the cause and legacy of historical events leading to the factional dispute which caused him to die "choked with ambition of the meaner sort." Scenes on the wall, tower, town, castle, and garden—a director's scenic nightmare in one short act—recall varied heights demonstrated before the Gates in Royal Processionals. Problems of bringing persons on and off the stage for each short scene in a day before clever lighting and shadowing of specific areas at once fade, however, when the notion of posed pageant is applied.

In Act III the formal institution of Parliament and its negotiating influence over the "civil discussion" that "gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth" strikes a truce. A series of parleys and arguments spill over into private and domestic fights. A knight reverses his loyalties. The breakdown and deterioration caused by factionalism infiltrates all levels of social life. But standing strong and loyal, brave Talbot formally and ceremoniously is knighted. The theme remains constant.

These discordant consequences visually appear in seven tableau scenes

of Act IV. In the first is a coronation scene where noble virtue should be accented, but focus shifts to the "deknighting" of cowardly Falstofe, who ran away from his post and "degraded" the worthiness of knighthood. Symbolically the Order of the Garter is ritually torn from him. In a second ritual of "plucking the red rose" a kingly call for peace and resistance of "Wilful disobedience and rebel" ironically evokes a prophecy of "jarring discord of nobility" caused by "factious bandying" of favorites. Six tableau scenes follow: at Bordeaux where Talbot's drum and trumpet call to "Open your city gates" on the plains of Gascony and trumpeted soldiers become aware of Brave Talbot's son on the opposing side; in another "plain" scene, Lucy cries, "The fraud of England, not the force of France / Hath now entrapped the noble minded Talbot"; from an English camp Talbot's son John heroically refuses to flee; on a battle field Talbot saves his son; and in the final dramatic tableau Old Talbot finds the body of his young son and meets "Antic Death."

These scenes contain elements quite prevalent in the Lord Mayor's Shows: ritualistic actions, juxtapositions of heroic and cowardly action, and stress on honorable conduct. Talbot's self-discipline is measured both by courageous military feats and personal moral values. The relationship with his son, his "son of chivalry," symbolizes a dying political order whereas Young Talbot's refusal to abandon his father reveals an heroic warrior's zeal for honor infused from his father's blood. Talbot's son inspires the father, in turn, to new deeds of valor. Emblematically and stylistically, the effect of the Talbot relationship and of the death, paralleling in many poetic aspects both the ritualism of the moralities and the Senecan plays, moves toward a moral abstraction of cosmic scope:

Thou Antic Death, which laugh'st us here to scorn,
Anon, from thy insulting tyranny,
Coupled in bonds of perpetuity,
Two Talbots, winged through the lither sky,
In thy despite shall 'scape mortality. (vii. 118-22)

The later scenes of Joan and her father provide dramatic symbolism, but scenes of Talbot and his son become stylized renditions of an idea, hence a tableau.

Act V contrasts the conquering, unified English army with the "drooping" French. Thunder and the symbolic dumb show of friends, called to give Joan "signs of future accidents" emblematic of remuneration, demonstrate that France's glory "droopeth to the dust." The "Holy Maid" who struck out in God's cause sinks pukingly to save herself whereas the initially imprisoned Talbot emerges nobly as soldier-knight-parent. As the "hag enchantress" flees, fair Margaret—taken prisoner by Suffolk—enters

enchantingly. The king seeking the “knot of amity” in peace agrees, for his country’s interests, to marry Margaret, thereby unwittingly setting off a wedlock of discords and continual strife.

The last of the *Henry VI* plays contains similar impressively emblematic scenes of a father-who-killed-his-son and son-who-killed-his-father as well as Henry’s solitary molehill scene. This pastoral wish for the idyllic shepherd’s life symbolizes benign leadership of his society and repeats a familiar emblem of Lord Mayor’s Shows. In this case, the king, however, is disrupting the order of the state in seeking the withdrawn life of tending flocks and in evading royal responsibilities. Symbolic pictures, thus, of King Henry sitting on his molehill and mourning father and son beside their victims shift the drama to a level of powerful abstraction. As an entity, the three parts of *Henry VI* reverse the structure of the customary royal pageant, in that the king’s stature is reduced rather than flatteringly elevated. A virtuous king strives to bring down rebellious and evil forces but stumbles in his attempts. Nevertheless, *exempla* of powerful forces for good and of disorder stemming from misjudgments suggest the moral theme.

Within the separate action of the first part of this first chronicle play by Shakespeare—so stilted and strangely formalistic—lies a Lord Mayor’s Show. As movement proceeds from act to act, the drama moves processionally from city gate to city gate and spectacularly concludes its thematic statement in a series of episodic tableaux. The structure, as in many of his plays, shifts between groups and events, but in *Henry VI* the formal pattern falls into tableau-like sequences, almost like the shuttering of a camera.

From Festival to Theatre

In all of Shakespeare’s dramas there appear elements from the wonderful folk festivals and city pageants: carnival holidays of midsummer, burlesque versions of actions performed seriously by betters, clowns and clowning, Lords of misrule, imps of mischief, wit, masquerades, and masques. From the very heartthrob of each, Shakespeare garnered, grasped, and pulled all these elements into his creative soul only to mingle, shape, and concentrate them into one majestic dramatic statement. His powerful art persuades, transforms, and preserves the deep truth of monarchy, the nature of Kingship itself, and the notion of the ruler as honored exemplary figure even as the great processional statically and stylistically attempted to glorify Elizabeth.

Could he have done so in another country in another time? Will another playwright intellectually and dramatically encompass those pageants of our day—the great Sailing Ships on Labor Day in New York, the thrilling return of the hostages, the rescue of Vietnam refugees, the Shuttle Columbia landing from outer space—into a mighty dramatic statement for all time to

understand? Or will this century's response be merely a Hollywoodian extravaganza or another televised M.A.S.H.? Oh, Will, Come back, Come back!

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Notes

¹M.C. Bradbrook, *The Rise of the Common Player* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 110.

²Margaret Loftus Ranald, "The Degradation of Richard II: An Inquiring into the Ritual Background," *English Literary Renaissance*, 7 (1971), p. 172.

“Age is Unnecessary”: A Jungian Approach to *King Lear*

by H.R. Coursen

I.

Jung describes the pattern of human life with an old metaphor:

Our life is like the course of the sun. In the morning it gains continually in strength until it reaches the zenith-height of high noon. Then comes the *enantiodromia*: the steady forward movement no longer denotes an increase, but a decrease, in strength. . . . The afternoon of life is just as full of meaning as the morning; only, its meaning and purpose are different. Man has two aims: the first is the natural aim, the begetting of children and the business of protecting the brood; to this belongs the acquisition of money and social position. When this aim has been reached, a new phase begins: the cultural aim. For the attainment of the former we have the help of nature, and, on top of that, education; for the attainment of the latter, little or nothing helps.¹

For *King Lear*, of course, wealth and status have been a “given.” Lear has remained “every inch a king” (IV. vi. 107) even unto the “very verge / Of [Nature’s] confine” (II. iv. 144-145). Lear is in several ways similar to one of Shakespeare’s earlier kings, Richard II. Richard was a child king, an historical fact implicit in Shakespeare’s characterization of the “mature” Richard—the petulant and capricious brat beneath the robes. Neither Lear nor Richard can remember a time when he was not king, but each must suffer an “unkinging,” a process Richard willfully encourages and upon which Lear consciously insists. Both Richard and Lear confuse *persona*, or “body natural,” with the office of kingship, or “body politic.” The king participates in the latter only while he, as individual, *is* king. Richard’s deposition represents the erasure of the intrinsic, sacramental qualities he has inherited, qualities that are not transmitted to the new king, Henry Bolingbroke. In the England after Richard II, kingship becomes a competitive office.²

Lear illegitimately employs royal plurality in talking of the “old man” (Kent’s phrase: I. i. 146) beneath the royal trappings:

’tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthened crawl toward death. (I. i. 38-41).

It is an “I” who dies, not “kingship”—that is, unless a king like Richard II

forces upon his successor a throne devoid of its intrinsic and invisible qualities, or unless a king like Lear commits a version of regicide by carving his realm into dukedoms, one of which, according to his original plan, to be ruled by a foreign prince, France or Burgundy. Both Richard II and Lear create a kind of jungle in Albion and encourage social Darwinism in their subjects. Lear's confusion of the "we" he has always employed with the "I" he ignores shows that Regan is piercingly accurate to say, "Yet, he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (I. i. 292-293). The agonizing journey towards self-knowledge must now begin for ex-king Lear. He anticipates a pleasant vacation, but the unknown self will emerge explosively, shattering everything Lear thought he knew. His life's work is about to begin.

II.

Lear's problem is exacerbated by his being what Jung calls the "extraverted thinking type." This personality-type tends to discern his "reality" in the external world and tends to employ thinking as his means of ordering that perceived reality. Unlike most men, Lear as King has experienced no opposition to his definitions and orderings of reality; indeed Lear has been told and has come to believe that he is "everything" (IV. vi. 104).

On the face of it, Lear's decision to divide his kingdom in thirds, "that future strife / May be prevented now" (I. i. 44-45) seems rational enough. Lear, after all, will die without a male heir. But the extraverted thinker, Jung suggests, "elevates reality, or an objectively oriented intellectual formula, into the ruling principle not only for himself but for his whole environment."³ To his introverted daughter, Cordelia, Lear says, "Mend your speech a little, / Lest it may mar your fortune" (I. i. 94-95). The extravert can see only the external goal—in this case the "more opulent" one third of Britain (I. i. 86) that Lear has promised Cordelia—and cannot understand someone with a different orientation, someone unwilling or unable to make the external adjustment necessary to achieve the objective. Jung's description of the expectations of the extraverted thinker fits Lear and the dynamics of the opening scene only too well:

By [his] formula good and evil . . . beauty and ugliness [are] measured. Everything that agrees with this formula is right, everything that contradicts it is wrong. . . . Because this formula seems to embody the entire meaning of life, it is made into a universal law which must be put into effect everywhere all the time, both individually and collectively. Just as the extraverted thinking type subordinates himself to his formula, so, for their own good, everybody round him must obey it too, for whoever refuses to obey is wrong—he is resisting the universal law and is therefore unreasonable, immoral, and without a conscience. [The moral code

of the extraverted thinker] forbids him to tolerate exceptions; his ideal must under all circumstances be realized, for in his eyes it is the purest conceivable formulation of objective reality, and therefore must also be a universally valid truth, quite indispensable for the salvation of mankind. . . Usually it is the nearest relatives who have to taste the unpleasant consequences of the extraverted formula, since they are the first to receive its relentless benefits. But in the end it is the subject himself who suffers most—and this brings [him] to the reverse side of the psychology of this type.⁴

Certainly Lear has a “formula”—for the division of his kingdom and for the public distribution of the land. The opening colloquy between Kent and Gloucester suggests that they have not been consulted during the formulation of Lear’s plan, but have merely been told that it is a *fait accompli*.

The insecure little boy beneath the robes, protected all his life from the necessity of growing up, desires stroking. For whatever reasons, Cordelia refuses to engage the process. When Kent joins Cordelia in opposing Lear’s scenario, Lear responds as Jung suggests he must:

Because of the highly impersonal character of the conscious attitude, the unconscious feelings [of the extraverted thinking type] are extremely personal and oversensitive, giving rise to secret prejudices, a readiness, for instance, to misconstrue any opposition to his formula as personal ill-will, or a constant tendency to make negative assumptions about other people in order to invalidate their arguments in advance—in defense, naturally, of his own touchiness. His unconscious sensitivity makes him sharp in tone, acrimonious, aggressive. Insinuations multiply. His feelings have a sultry and resentful character—always a mark of the inferior function [which in the case of the thinking type *is* feeling]. Magnanimous as he may be in sacrificing himself to his intellectual goal, his feelings are petty, mistrustful, crotchety, and conservative. Anything new that is not already contained in his formula is seen through a veil of unconscious hatred and condemned accordingly.⁵

When Kent tells Lear that Lear “dost evil” (I. i. 165), Lear shouts back:

Hear me, recreant! . . . This shall not be revoked.
(I. i. 165, 179)

Lear claims here a continuing control over the realm he has just given away. As Jung says of the extraverted thinking type, “The self-assertion of the personality is transferred to the formula. Truth is no longer allowed to speak for itself.”⁶ Both Kent and Cordelia are accused of “pride” (I. i. 129, I. i. 169), an obvious example of Lear’s projection of unconscious content onto those who would oppose him. Unlike Kent, who will learn one lesson from the first scene and continue to serve Lear in disguise, Cordelia knows immediately that she can only “Love and be silent” (I. i. 62), even as she knows that she remains

"true" to qualities deeper than the premises of Lear's royal auction sale (I. i. 106). To her Lear replies, "Let it be so, thy truth then be thy dower!" (I. i. 107). Cordelia's truth will become Lear's, of course, but only much later and only when Lear lacks the power to transmit the truth he embraces to a kingdom no longer his. One of the concomitants of Lear's abuse of power is his encouraging similar abuse in his subjects. The principle he inculcates in rejecting Cordelia and banishing Kent in the first scene will kill Cordelia at the end.

The Lear of the first scene has repressed his "inner nature," the opposite to his conscious orientation represented by Cordelia. Lear will, as Jung suggests, "suffer most" before arriving at "the reverse side of the psychology of this type," as repressed content is released in proportion to the force with which it has been held down. As Lear phrases it, "O, how this mother swells up toward my heart! / Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below." (II. iv. 55-57). For Lear, the critical mass awaiting activation has been building for a long lifetime.

Lear exemplifies introverted feeling most vividly in that parody of I. i., the "trial scene" (III. iv.), where he projects internal content on everything he sees:

Fool: Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

Lear: She cannot deny it.

Fool: Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool. (III. vi. 49-51).

Later, as Lear sees the blinded Gloucester, he will cry, "Ha! Goneril, with a white beard!" (IV. vi. 96).

The Lear of the first scene is primed for the terrible explosion that will occur, although he is—naturally—unconscious of the charges he has set. As Jung says,

Thoroughly unprepared we take the step into the afternoon of life; worse still, we take this step with the false assumption that our [former] truths and ideals will [still] serve us. . . But we cannot live in the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning; for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true will in the evening have become a lie.⁷

Lear wishes to ride with his hundred knights to the whim of his own will. He will "retain," he claims, "The name, and all th' addition to a king" (I. i. 135-136). He will cling to the plurality of office while shaking off all of its responsibilities. He assumes, as Roy Battenhouse suggests, "the status of a demi-god."⁸ In *King Lear*, such *hubris* is not punished by any external gods but from within, by the inner power of a psyche that inevitably punctures "inflation," that elevation of ego that June Singer labels "the hubris of

consciousness."⁹ Having exiled himself from the palace of Dives even while attempting to maintain the attitude of Dives, Lear must become Lazarus.

Lear had thought to "set [his] rest / On [Cordelia's] kind nursery" (I. i. 123-124), displaying—as he does throughout I.i. and in his subsequent attempts to secure kingly comfort at the palaces of Goneril and Regan—the tendency Jung ascribes to the aging:

Those in transition often cling to the illusion of youth or to their children, hoping to salvage in this way a last little scrap of youth. In a sort of second puberty, not infrequently accompanied by tempests of passion—the "dangerous age."¹⁰

The danger is augmented, of course, by the fact that Lear has never had to experience the transitional stages described so well by the Freudian, Eric Erikson.¹¹ For Lear, all crises—adolescent, mid-life, and old-age—will occur with a devastating simultaneity. The danger is enhanced by the fact that it will be introverted feeling that will break through the fragile stratum of Lear's rational surface. The "inner problem" for the extraverted thinker is captured by the "nobody appreciates me!" syndrome, a projection of the individual's failure to appreciate himself, or to recognize that he has an inner life that demands attention. As external objects and people—whom he treats as objects—fail to validate his worth, the extraverted thinker is forced to question the identity he has known only as it has been reflected back to him: "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" Lear demands (I. iv. 231). The Fool replies, "Lear's shadow" (I. iv. 232). "I would learn that," says Lear (I. iv. 233). Indeed he will. His psyche has a "darker purpose" (I. i. 36) in mind for him, something far deeper than whatever the conscious intentions of a lifetime have been. The "shadow," in Jungian terms, is that personality formed of all that the individual has repressed from conscious orientation. In Lear's case it would seem to comprise what we attribute to the right side of the brain: dreams and the irrational, the feminine, or "Yin," earth and intuition, and the gestaltian abilities that Cordelia possesses but that the thinking type neglects in favor of piecemeal analysis.¹²

Lear can pose for a time as the well-intentioned and deeply wronged philanthropist—"Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all" (III. iv. 20)—but we know and Lear must learn that this is but a pose. His daughters—including Goneril and Regan—have been made the victims of the "relentless benefits" Lear has imposed. As the Fool says, "Why, this fellow has banished two on's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will" (I. iv. 102-104). In seeking validation from his children, Lear has inverted the proper order of his family, as the Fool makes clear: "since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers. . . thou gav'st them the rod, and put'st down thine own breeches" (I. iv. 174-175). Since it has been a royal family, the order of his kingdom—or

whatever one would call the new political entity that is Britain—is turned upside down as well. When Lear demands of Oswald, “Who am I, sir?” Oswald correctly replies, “My lady’s father” (I. iv. 79-80).

Lear reverts to childishness as he recreates his lifetime along the last days of old age. The normal processes of maturation, or what Jung calls “individuation,” a process with which the subject cooperates, have not been experienced by this always-king. “Old fools are babes again,” says Goneril (I. iii. 20), employing a renaissance cliché (cf. Jaques’s “second childishness” in *As You Like It*: II. vii. 164), but one that describes what is happening to Lear, as Jung suggests:

Whenever a man is confronted by an apparently insurmountable obstacle, he draws back: he makes what is technically called a regression. He goes back to the times when he found himself in similar situations, and tries to apply again the means that helped him then. . . So the regression continues right back into childhood and ends up in the time before childhood.¹³

III.

Jung’s psychological types help us understand not merely the phenomenology of individual characters, but also the dynamics of interaction between characters. The extravert, as we have seen, is oriented towards the attainment of external goals. His behavior is dictated by what he perceives to be society’s norms; if he is king, as Henry V says, “nice customs cursy to great kings. . . we are the makers of manners” (V. ii. 272-275). The extravert not only has difficulty looking inward; he will find it a painful experience when he must do so (cf. Bolingbroke: *II Henry IV*: III. 4-31, and Henry V: IV. i. 230-306). The introvert, conversely, is relatively oblivious to external reality and has great difficulty being understood in that world, since often he does not care whether he is understood or not and is unwilling to be construed by the norms accepted by that world. The introvert is constantly exploring his or her inner value system, a system unique and individual, hence not particularly conformable to accepted norms even if the introvert wanted it to be. We can safely infer that the dynamics of interaction between Lear and Cordelia in scene one, as Lear has set it up, are likely to result in disastrous misunderstanding.

Cordelia would seem to be one of Jung’s “introverted irrational types.” “Irrational” here does not connote a value judgment; non-rational or arational might be more precise. “Irrational” in Cordelia’s case corresponds to “intuitive.” The intuitive tends to overlook or dismiss concrete reality, since sensation is her most deeply repressed function; Desdemona provides a good example of the *dangers* of being an intuitive type. The “introverted irrational” type, says Jung, is “mostly underestimated, or at least

misunderstood." Cordelia cannot help herself, for, as Jung suggests of her type:

They simply do not notice that the little they do manage to communicate contains hardly anything of what they themselves have experienced. The fragmentary. . . character of their communications makes too great a demand on the understanding and good will of those around them; also, their communications are without the personal warmth that alone carries the power of conviction.¹⁴

However much we sympathize with a Cordelia trapped into a scenario that violates her real love for her father, her first few responses do seem to correspond to Jung's description:

Lear. what can you say to draw
 A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.
Cordelia. Nothing, my lord.
Lear. Nothing?
Cordelia. Nothing. (I. i. 85-89)

While Lear may be a thinking type, it is Cordelia's *feeling* that had always communicated itself to him—that component Lear has hidden from himself and which can only be blocked by the format Lear has imposed upon scene one. Cordelia's feeling—that is, her emotional evaluation of the trap into which her father has thrust her—can only be negative. And Lear, seeing his neat little pattern of ego-gratification shattered, can only respond with repressed feeling, a rage rendered coherent by the demands of dramatic verse.

Clearly, the father and daughter who love each other are to be driven farther apart. Cordelia can only describe "effective" utterance as "that glib and oily art / To speak and purpose not" (I. i. 224-225). She is correct, of course, about Goneril and Regan, who seem able to "heave [their] heart [s] into [their] mouth [s]" (I. i. 91-92). Cordelia recognizes that "purpose" lies beneath the level of language, that her "love's / More ponderous than [her] tongue" (I. i. 77-78). "We shall," says Jung, "form a fairer judgement of [the introverted irrational type] and show them greater forbearance, when we begin to realize how hard it is [for them] to translate into intelligible language what is perceived within."¹⁵ Cordelia, it seems, can only scorn Lear's auction:

Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? (I. i. 99-100)

While her scorn is a well-directed sneering at the calculus of self-interest Lear

has encouraged, her words are bound to draw from Lear the terrible rejection he administers:

. . . Better thou
Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.
(I. i. 233-234).

The use of the singular pronouns suggests Lear's selfish agenda for this public scene. His cancellation of "paternal care" becomes immediately ironic when he talks of his hopes to "rest" in Cordelia's "kind nursery" (I. i. 123-124), ironic yet again when we find Cordelia caring for him later, and tragically ironic, as I shall suggest, when Lear neglects the safety of his daughter.

Neither France nor Kent is deceived by what France calls "A tardiness in nature / Which often leaves the history unspoke / That it intends to do" (I. i. 235-237). "These types," says Jung of the introverted irrational, "are admittedly one-sided specimens of nature, but they are an object lesson for the man who refused to be blinded by the intellectual fashion of the day" (i.e. what a king like Lear dictates). France's evaluation of Cordelia coincides with Jung's description of the introverted irrational type: "Their life teaches more than their words."¹⁶ Cordelia's plight demonstrates what Jung calls "one of the greatest errors of our civilization, that is, the superstitious belief in verbal statements."¹⁷ Lear, of course, raises that superstition into a pseudo-religion. As Jung says of the extraverted thinker:

Although reason itself tells us that every intellectual formula can never be anything more than a partial truth and can never claim general validity, in practice the formula gains such an ascendancy that all other possible standpoints are thrust into the background. It usurps the place of all more general, less definite, more modest and therefore more truthful views of life. It even supplants that general view of life we call religion. Thus the formula becomes a religion, although in essentials it has not the slightest connection with anything religious. At the same time, it assumes the essentially religious quality of absoluteness.¹⁸

"Now by Apollo," Lear begins. "Now by Apollo, king," Kent interrupts, "Thou swear'st thy gods in vain" (I. i. 160-161). Lear is king, of course, hence a representative of the "collective." As king and body politic, he *is* Britain. He is thus subject to the inflation that Jung attributes to one in whom "the collective and the personal psyche [are] fused together."¹⁹ "Through his identification with the collective psyche he will. . . try to force the demands of the unconscious upon others, for identity with the collective psyche always brings with it a feeling of universal validity—'godlikeness'—which completely ignores all differences in the personal psyche of others."²⁰ Lear's "rational position inevitably forces others into irrationality—"the demands of the

unconscious." This implicit demand causes others to act in contradiction to their natures, and to "Nature" itself; two sisters profess a love they do not feel, a third must deny a love she *does* feel because it cannot be uttered. The scene anticipates the "turning himself inside out" that Lear must experience later. Here, his ego-defenses force him into increasing "godlikeness." If the truth does emerge, as it does via Kent, the extraverted thinker can defend himself only by assuming increasingly irrational positions. It may be that the most "rational" schemes emerge from the most irrational of premises; one thinks of Swift's consciously ironic "A Modest Proposal," taken seriously by some, and Nazi Germany's application of the modern industrial model to the extermination of millions of people.

Jung suggests that the extraverted thinker's insistence on his "formula" must trigger an inner reaction: "all the psychological tendencies [the formula] has repressed build up a counter-position in the unconscious and give rise to paroxysms of doubt. . . .Frequently the unconscious counter-position is embodied in a woman."²¹ The "Cordelia position" begins to assert itself within Lear as he suffers the subtractions Goneril forces upon him: "O most small fault, / How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!" (I. iv. 268-269). Lear has yet to *feel* that insight—feeling being the evaluative function opposite to thinking, thus Lear's most repressed function, thus the one most likely to burst forth in raw, chaotic, and extreme loss of control. The "over-rational" man can hardly save himself by rationality alone. If he cannot surrender it, allowing other modes of perception and evaluation to augment mere thinking, he will surrender himself to those other modes; if he resists integration, he must suffer disintegration.

Lear, as characterized, clings to his rationality, rejects his intuitions, is victimized by his feelings—as thinking types are (Hamlet, for example)—and resists the process Jung describes:

The afternoon of life consists in a partial feminization of the man. . . . It is understandable enough that [the man] should shrink from it, philosophically as well as morally, hence the alternative sought is a convulsive stiffening of the previous attitude.²²

Lear's rejection of this process is expressed vehemently to Goneril (I. iv. 298-312), and later to both Goneril and Regan (II. iv. 274-279). Lear, obviously, resists feminization, stiffens into a kind of god-figure who threatens in proportion to his loss of power, externalizes the revenges that his own psyche is committing upon him, and becomes more and more childish as his compulsive male attitude perpetuates itself. Feminization involves the male's contact with his "anima," the feminine soul of his androgynous nature. As insisting on absoluteness drives Lear towards ludicrous immaturity, so insisting on total maleness drives him towards stereotypical femininity—

stereotypical because, without contact with his androgyny, the externally derived stereotype is all that is available to him (as is true also of Hamlet). As John Shaw says of Lear, "By discarding all that is 'womanly' in him, espousing rather the 'manly' art of revenge, [he] leads himself down a path of psychic self-destruction."²³ Jung suggests that "the subsequent, apparently sudden irruption of alien contents is really not sudden at all, but is rather the result of an unconscious development that has been going on for years."²⁴

No one, I am sure, applauds the inhospitality of Goneril and Regan. "This house is little," moans Regan (II. iv. 285), even as the great storm rumbles its prelude across Gloucestershire. But yet—each is accurate about who is driving himself away from the hearth and onto the heath. That a character is "unsympathetic" (to put it mildly in the cases of Goneril and Regan) does not mean that everything she speaks is false:

Goneril. 'Tis his own blame hath put himself from rest,
And must needs taste his folly. (II. iv. 286-287).
Regan. to willful men
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. (II. iv. 299-301).

By demanding "false feeling" in scene one, Lear has encouraged such unfeeling rationalizations. Lear may be "More sinned against than sinning" (III. ii. 60), but he must be blamed for releasing the malign energies of Goneril and Regan into what was his kingdom. Lear's terrible inner experience will be replicated within the sundered, sundering island that he once commanded. One of the great economies of Shakespearean drama is that as the king is, so is his kingdom. As Lear is left to explore the psychic jungle within him, Britain becomes a jungle.

IV.

To say that Lear's "education" is harsh is to put it mildly. The man preeminently shielded from "hard knocks" receives them in abundance. Lear must undergo self-destruction—the eradication of the "ego," or all that conscious orientation thought it knew—in order to experience regeneration, the establishment of what Jung calls "the Self," a consciousness that incorporates the deeper, previously ignored, energies of the psyche. In that Lear the man accomplishes this progress, the segment of the play that culminates in the reconciliation scene between Lear and Cordelia (IV. vii.) can be termed the most profound comedy in the Shakespearean canon.

Lear's threats of unnamable revenges against his two ungrateful daughters are childish, of course, appropriately met by the sneer of a line like Regan's "I pray you, father, being weak, seem so" (II. iv. 198). These hardly

admirable daughters reflect a normal enough attitude towards old age, as Jung suggests:

An inexperienced youth thinks one can let the old people go, because not much more can happen to them anyway. They have their lives behind them and are no better than petrified pillars of the past.²⁵

As with Satan in *Paradise Lost*, who promotes a "fortunate fall" quite unintentionally, Goneril and Regan press Lear into the *necessary* experience Jung describes:

the regression continues right back into childhood and ends up in the time before childhood. . . .Regression carried to a healthy solution means a linking back with the world of natural instincts, which in its formal or ideal aspect is a kind of *prima materia*. If this *prima materia* can be assimilated by the conscious mind, it will bring about a reactivation and reorganization of its contents.²⁶

Lear must stand at the ground-zero of psychic eradication, a time before childhood, a time out of which he must be born again to the human ideal of the Cordelia-in-him and to contact with the validating moisture of Cordelia's tears, "holy water from her heavenly eyes" (IV. iii. 32). Or, as Jung describes it within an appropriate New Testament vehicle:

Every descent is followed by an ascent; the vanishing shapes are shaped anew, and truth is valid in the end if it suffers change and bears new witness in new images, in new tongues, like a new wine is put into new bottles.²⁷

In the pride of kingly sway, Lear had sworn by the sun-god, Apollo, and by "the sacred radiance of the sun" (I. i. 108). Now he apologizes: "I am old and foolish" (IV. vii. 84). As Jung says, "After having lavished its light upon the world, the sun withdraws its rays in order to illuminate itself."²⁸

But before that moment, Lear must suffer the descent into darkness. He does so as the extraverted thinker must, clinging to the unraveling fabric of rationality. Standing outside the hovel, feeling the storm penetrate his aged joints and sinews, Lear utters his famous homily about "Poor naked wretches" (III. iii. 28-36). Lear still speaks as king, albeit a Dives who might now notice Lazarus at his gate. Furthermore, he expresses a belief in a benevolent cosmos in which the king is dispenser of luxury's excess. He has not yet become aware of the deeper chaos lying beneath his rationalizations or of the chaotic nature of nature itself (as this play depicts nature, as opposed to "the world" of *Macbeth*). Jung says of the extraverted thinker: "If tolerance for the sick, the suffering, or the abnormal should chance to be an ingredient of the formula, special provisions will be made for humane societies, prisons,

missions, etc., or at least extensive plans will be drawn up."²⁹ Lear's "charity," then, is an extension of his formula. That formula, however, is one that Lear can no longer enact, for he is no longer the "pomp" that might take "physic." The man himself must taste the bitter medicine he has prepared for himself.

Still assuming the role of the all-powerful demi-god, Lear projects "The tempest in [his] mind" (III. iv. 12) onto the universe: "Blow winds. . . That makes ungrateful man" (III. ii. 1-9). Lear would summon the end of the world—without warning any Noah—but the invocation of *thanatos* is really an expression of what is happening to Lear. As Jung says, "A collapse of the conscious attitude. . . always feels like the end of the world, as though everything had tumbled back into original chaos. One feels delivered up, disoriented, like a rudderless ship that is abandoned to the moods of the elements."³⁰

"Charity" alternates with nihilism as the storm buffets Lear, but each mood is an index of his descent. He must suffer the abasement of "the proud king," as Maynard Mack has noted.³¹ Mack isolates Nebuchadnezzar, who, after suppressing the unconscious regulating influence [of humility], fell victim to a psychosis that contained the very counter-action he had sought to escape: "he, the lord of the earth, was degraded to an animal."³² Lear predicts what will happen to him, even as he attempts to evade psychic and physical inevitability:

O reason not the need! Our basest beggars
Are in the poorest things superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. (II. iv. 261-264).

Even as he sinks, Lear remains lucid. He experiences "A happiness that often madness hits on," as Polonius remarks of Hamlet (II. ii. 210-211). Lear, for example, sees through the "Authority" (Kent's word for Lear's countenance: I. iv. 30) of which he has been the absolute embodiment:

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back;
Thou hotly lusting to use her in that kind
For which thou whip'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.
Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks;
Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it. (IV. vi. 160-167).

Lear, like Claudius, Isabella, *et. al.*, penetrates to the hypocrisy inherent in the human practice of the platonic concept of "Justice." He glances at the prostitution which he, as king and father, has promoted, and he employs one of the play's consistent metaphoric contrasts, that between robes and rags.

Jung's analysis of authority speaks accurately to *King Lear* (and to both *Henriads*, *Hamlet*, *Measure for Measure*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest*, and, for that matter, to *Antigone*, *The Malcontent*, Giraudoux's *Electra*, *The Wizard of Oz*, etc.):

Identification with one's title is very attractive indeed, which is precisely why so many men are nothing more than the decorum accorded to them by society. In vain would one look for a personality behind the husk. Underneath all the padding one would find a very pitiable little creature. That is why the office—or whatever the husk may be—is so attractive: it offers easy compensation for personal deficiencies.³³

Lear, in madness, comes to know as much, which is to say that his madness is not merely lucid in itself but an avenue towards a new set of values. Clothes represent a kind of ego, or consciousness. What lies above the deeper psyche, repressing fundamental insight, must be stripped away before consciousness can be reorganized around that deeper content. Lear expresses this awareness in physical terms upon seeing Edgar: "Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (III. iv. 105-107). Lear recreates physically what is happening to him psychologically by tearing at his own garments: "Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here." (III. iv. 107-108). The "lending" of consciousness, a late development in man's evolution, which Lear thought was "everything," and the accident of kingship which Lear has equated with consciousness strip themselves away before storms external and internal.

Lear sinks into that time before childhood and believes upon awakening that he has been disinterred: "You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave" (IV. vii. 45). He looks up and sees Cordelia:

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead. (IV. vii. 46-48).

The analogue to Lear's awakening is the story of Dives and Lazarus, those contrasting twins of the psyche. The rich man has become the beggar, although Lear does not recognize the transition at first. He believes that he is "in hell," as Kenneth Muir suggests³⁴; or, since the play may be purely pagan, as William Elton has argued,³⁵ Lear believes that he inhabits some zone of perpetual torment. He is able, however, to contact the precious moisture of Cordelia's tears: "Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not." (IV. vii. 71). Regardless of the debate about the religious premises of *King Lear*, the analogue upon which Shakespeare draws for Lear's awakening, and one that we know he knew,³⁶ is Christian:

There was a certain riche man, which was clothed in purple
and fine linen, and fared wel and delicately everie day.

Also there was a certaine begger named Lazarus, which was
laide at his gate ful of sores,

And desired to be refreshed with the crommes that fell from
an riche mans table: yea, and the dogs came and licked his sores.

And it was so that the begger dyed and was caryed by the Angels
into Abrahams bosome. The riche man also dyed and was buried.

And being in hel in torments, he lift up his eyes, and sawe
Abraham a farre of, & Lazarus in his bosome.

Then he cryed, and said, Father Abraham, have mercie on me,
and send Lazarus that he may dippe the typ of his finger in water,
and coole my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame.

But Abraham said, Sonne, remember that thou in thy life time
receivedst thy pleasures, and like wise Lazarus paines: now therefore
is he comforted, and thou art tormented.

Besides all this, betwene you and us there is a great gulf set;
so that they which wolde go from hence to you, can not, nether can
they come from thence to us. St. Luke: XVI, 19-25 (Genevan
Version).

The Genevan gloss to verse 25 suggests that "In calling him sonne, he taunteth his vaine boasting, who in his life [claimed] to be the sonne of Abraham: warning us also hereby how little glorious titles availe."

Lear learns that the gulf between him and Cordelia is neither infinite nor eternal, and that his earlier claim, "we/Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see/That face of hers again" (I. i. 262-264) has been happily overruled by forces greater than those of any king. Lear admits his age and his foolishness, but his rebirth has no redeeming efficacy for the world he once ruled. In Luke, Dives begs Abraham "that he may testifye unto [his five brothers] lest they also come unto this place of torment." But Abraham replies that "If they heare not Moses and the Prophetes, nether will thei be persuaded, thogh one rise from the dead againe." (verses 28 and 31).³⁷ While the inefficacy of Lear's resurrection is adumbrated in the biblical story, it is Lear's own benign ignorance that leads to his second and fatal tragedy—the death of Cordelia, a crucifixion that *follows* a resurrection, the event that creates the infinite and eternal gulf expressed in Lear's reiterated "Never!" (V. iii. 310). *King Lear* may reach in IV. vii. the level of a comfortable, "lesson well learned" allegory, but it reaches beyond that, to the annihilation of any comfort.

V.

Having been captured by Edmund and his hardened troopers, Lear and Cordelia go off to prison, Lear with childlike gaiety:

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,
 And take upon's the mystery of things,
 As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,
 In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones
 That ebb and flow by th' moon. . .
 Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
 The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?
 (V. iii. 8-21).

Wonderful as such words may be, particularly when coming from the same mouth that spewed curses in the first scene, we might notice that Lear *has* achieved Cordelia's "kind nursery." He wanders off to prison within a heady cloud of wish-fulfillment. No one will argue that Lear's "illness" has aimed at attracting Cordelia's "attention"—a common technique of children—but it has had that result, a result upon which Lear insists almost as willfully as he had insisted upon his auction sale so much earlier. And, as earlier, Cordelia is granted virtually no lines within Lear's scenario. Her attempt to recall Lear to the reality of their situation—"Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?" (V. iii. 7)—is met by Lear's "No, no, no, no!" (V. iii. 8). Lear here seems to suppress his awareness of evil—the evil he himself has empowered—almost as vigorously as he silenced the virtue that tried to communicate with him, through his own intuition, and through Cordelia and Kent, in the first scene.³⁸

Lear indulges here in a "hubris of consciousness" in its way as extreme as the "pride" he exhibited in the first scene. As Jung suggests of ego inflation: "the individual imagines that he has caught the psyche and holds her in the palm of his hand."³⁹ Lear is only partially enlightened. In believing he has reached complete enlightenment, he projects it upon Cordelia—"Have I caught thee?"—as he had projected his stubborn pride on Cordelia and Kent in scene one. In doing so, he dooms his daughter to darkness. Lear had wished to be a demi-god earlier. Now, he assumes the status of "God's spy." His *contemptus mundi* is valid enough, no doubt, but when raised to universal principle so vehemently, the contempt begins to refute itself. It becomes a self-congratulatory *love* of the world—as the perceiver views it from his self-elected superior position. As Lear had asserted absolute superiority in the first scene, thereby insuring his debasement, so his similar assertion, even if it emerges from opposite premises in V. iii., opens out to complete erasure of the position claimed. Lear ignores the practical realities, the danger into which he and his beloved Cordelia—both political enemies of their captor, Edmund—have fallen. Lear's inflexible "thinking" had overruled practicality earlier—even while claiming to serve it. Now the overflow of feeling eradicates practicality again.

Lear embraces his new insights with a power proportionate to his former rejection of them. For Lear, however, the transition to a new viewpoint, as Jung describes it, has not been as gradual or as temperate as it should have been:

The transition from morning to afternoon means a reevaluation of the earlier values. There is the urgent need to appreciate the value of the opposite of our former ideals, to perceive the error in our convictions, to recognize the untruth in our former truth, and to feel how much antagonism and even hatred lay in what, until now, had passed for love.⁴⁰

In many ways, that is a precis of the allegory of *King Lear*. But for the title character, long sheltered by kingship, thus subject to the sudden coming-on of mental tempests, the transition has been abrupt, radical, and, no matter how sweet the taste of new insights, unbalanced. As Jung suggests:

Not a few of those who are drawn into the conflict of opposites jettison everything that had previously seemed to them good and worth striving for; they try to live in complete opposition to their former ego.⁴¹

A slight residue of Lear's former suspiciousness of others' motives might have saved Cordelia. As it is, he gets there only in time to kill the soldier Edmund had commissioned to hang her. Jung suggests what happens to Lear on going to prison: "the danger [is that] the products of the unconscious [all that Lear had previously repressed or ignored] are greatly overvalued precisely because they were boundlessly undervalued before. . . owing to ego-inflation [the individual] loses his capacity for judgment altogether."⁴²

In accepting the "compensatory woman" within his own psychic structure, the ability to discern quality instead of quantity, Lear overcompensates. He ignores in his new-found value system the political reality that may dictate Cordelia's summary execution. Lear fails to realize that, although he has achieved new insights, the radical evil he has encouraged in his world will not crawl back to its cage merely because of the change in him.⁴³ His confident negligence—after he has seemingly learned everything—ignores both the Jungian prescription and the old lesson of Greek tragedy. Individuation is an on-going process, and no man can be counted happy until after his death. Lear's overvaluation of truths he had learned the hard way insists finally on his gazing down at his daughter dead. That—and not the optimistic theory that he blindly believes that Cordelia is still alive—breaks his heart at last. Lear should be allowed the dignity of seeing in the dead Cordelia the bitter fruit of his final error.

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*I am indebted to an excellent essay on *King Lear* by one of my students, John Shaw, "The Theme of Ageing in *King Lear*," and to The Bowdoin College Faculty Research Fund for help in preparing this paper.

Notes

¹C.G. Jung, *Collected Works* (The Bollingen Foundation, New York, 1953), VII, trans. R.F.C. Hull, p. 73, hereafter cited as *CW*.

²For a full treatment of *Richard II* in this regard, see my chapter on the play in *Christian Ritual and the World of Shakespeare's Tragedies* (Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg, Pa., 1976).

³Jung, VI, p. 347.

⁴Jung, VI, pp. 347-348.

⁵Jung, VI, p. 350.

⁶Jung, VI, p. 350.

⁷Jung, VIII, p. 399.

⁸Roy W. Battenhouse, "Shakespeare's Moral Vision," *Stratford Papers on Shakespeare: 1964* (Toronto, 1965), 163.

⁹Jane Singer, *Boundaries of the Soul* (New York, 1973), p. 408.

¹⁰Jung, VII, p. 74. Jung could be describing Lear specifically in this section: "Often, indeed, a false ambition survives, in that an old man wants to be a youth again, or at least feels he must behave like one. . . . But the problems that crop up at this age are no longer to be solved by the old recipes: the hand of this clock cannot be put back. What youth found and must find outside, the man of life's afternoon must find within himself." (pp. 73-74).

¹¹E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York, 1963), 2nd Edition.

¹²Cf. Robert E. Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (San Francisco, 1973).

¹³Jung, VII, p. 76.

¹⁴Jung, VI, p. 403.

¹⁵Jung, VI, p. 404.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Jung, VI, p. 404. Jung goes on to say, "their lives teach the other possibility, the interior life which is so painfully wanting in our civilization." (p. 405).

¹⁸Jung, VI, p. 351.

¹⁹Jung, VII, p. 149.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Jung, VI, p. 351.

²²Jung, V, p. 300.

²³John Shaw, "The Theme of Ageing in *King Lear*" (Bowdoin College, 1980), 6.

²⁴Jung, VII, p. 174.

²⁵Jung, VII, p. 73.

²⁶Jung, VII, p. 76.

²⁷Jung, V, p. 357.

²⁸Jung, VIII, p. 399.

²⁹Jung, VI, p. 347.

³⁰Jung, VII, p. 161.

³¹Maynard Mack, *King Lear in Our Time* (Berkeley, California, 1965).

³²Jung, VIII, pp. 80-81.

³³*The Portable Jung*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York, 1971), p. 91.

³⁴*King Lear*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London, 1972), p. 178, n. 47.

³⁵William R. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (New York, 1966).

³⁶Cf. *Richard III*: IV. iii. 38 ("Abraham's bosom"), and the Hostess's "Arthur's bosom" (*Henry V*: II. ii. 9 and 10).

³⁷The theology here might seem complicated, in view of Christ's Resurrection, but the Genevan gloss on the passage makes clear that Dives would still be dead: "Which declareth that it is to late to be instructed by the dead, if in their life time thei can not profite by the livelie worde of God. As faith cometh by Gods worde, so is it mainteined by the same. So that nether we oght to

loke for Angels from heaven, or the dead to confirme us therein, but onelie the worde of God is sufficient to life everlasting." Perhaps the best gloss on the passage from Luke is Christ's response to Thomas: "because thou hast sene me, thou belevest: blessed are they that have not sene, and have beleved" (John XX. 29, Genevan Version). The gloss to the "they" in that passage reads "Which depend upon the simplicitie of Gods worde, & grounde not them selves upon mans sense and reason." Dives's wish to return to life can hardly be said to be rooted in faith; his wish is at least partially self-interested, while Christ's sacrifice is selfless, except where it emerges from the deep premise that Jung calls the "Self."

³⁸For a fuller account of the "Christian content" of *King Lear*, intended as a partial rebuttal to Elton's pagan thesis, see my chapter on *King Lear* in *Christian Ritual*. For a more detailed argument on the end of *King Lear*, see my article, "The Death of Cordelia: A Jungian Approach," in *Hebrew University Studies in Literature*, 8 (1980), 1-12.

³⁹Jung, XI, par. 141.

⁴⁰Jung, VII, p. 74.

⁴¹Ibid. Jung goes on to say, "It is of course a fundamental mistake to imagine that when we see the non-value in a value or the untruth in a truth, the value or the truth ceases to exist. It has only become *relative*. Everything human is relative, because everything rests on an inner polarity; for everything is a phenomenon of energy" (pp. 74-75, Jung's ital.).

⁴²*The Portable Jung*, pp. 202-293.

⁴³On this point see the excellent book by the Freudian, Bruno Bettelheim, *The Informed Heart* (New York, 1960), particularly p. 249. For a valuable non-Jungian approach to *King Lear*, see Michael Long, *The Unnatural Scene* (London, 1976), pp. 158-219.

The True Chronicle History of King Leir and Shakespeare's *King Lear*: A Reconsideration

by Peter Pauls

That *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* was a primary source for the main plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is almost universally accepted.¹ However, the extent and nature of the old play's influence remain difficult to assess.² The chronicle play is so different in tone from Shakespeare's tragedy, so much less grand in scale, that critics have often looked elsewhere for the source of Shakespeare's inspiration. Some have argued that the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's brief account has been greatly underestimated.³ Others have contended that the story of the Paphlagonian King in Sidney's *Arcadia*, or perhaps the speculative essays of Montaigne, provided Shakespeare with the dark skepticism which is so totally absent in the old play.⁴ There can be little doubt that these and other sixteenth century works, as well as other versions of the story, had a profound effect on Shakespeare's play. Nevertheless, the old play furnished Shakespeare with more raw material than any other single source. From it he took whole scenes, many of the characters and much of the language and stage business. It is these basic elements that Shakespeare reshaped and adapted to suit his more tragic vision.

W.W. Greg, in "The Date of *King Lear* and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story," comments on Shakespeare's indebtedness to this primary source. Greg notes the similarities in structure, situation, thought and expression.⁵ To illustrate the resemblances in expression he lists some "two score" verbal parallels.⁶ In spite of this cumulative evidence of dependence, Greg concludes his analysis with the following statement:

But in writing *Lear* Shakespeare did not do what he is credited with having done on previous occasions—leave standing whatever he thought good enough to pass muster on the stage: the whole thing has been fused and transmuted in the alembic of his genius. Yet it would seem that as he wrote, ideas, phrases, cadences from the old play still floated in his memory below the level of conscious thought, and that now and again one or another helped to fashion the words that flowed from his pen.⁷

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the parallels between the two plays once again in an attempt to understand more fully this process of "transmutation." Shakespeare's reshaping of the old chronicle play to suit his own particular requirements was probably more conscious than Greg

suggests. This re-creation of source material is especially evident in Shakespeare's use of the old play's language. Even when he borrows a striking line or phrase he often heightens or intensifies it and so makes it his own. This is how some of the "poverty-stricken diction"⁸ and dreary moralizing in the old play is transformed into great poetry. Sometimes this transformation is achieved by amplification, at other times by abridgment or condensation. In addition to reworking the language of his source, Shakespeare also makes the characters of the old play more complex and the stage business much more artful and effective.

I.

A discussion of the relationship between these two plays must begin with the more obvious resemblances. The following verbal parallels are additions to those cited by W.W. Greg, Robert A. Law, Kenneth Muir and Dorothy Nameri:⁹

- i) *Cordella*. Dear father, do not so mistake my words,
Nor my plain meaning be misconstrued;
My tongue was never used to flattery (296-298)
- Cordelia*. Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so; since I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue (I. i. 76-78)
- ii) *Cambria*. 'Tis very strange, I know not what to think (450)
France. This is most strange (I. i. 212)
- iii) *Leir*. (to Perillus) What man art thou that takes any pity
Upon the worthless state of old Leir? (852-853)
- Lear*. (to Kent) What art thou?
. What art
thou? (I. iv. 10-23)
- iv) *Leir*. (to Perillus) Did I ere give thee living. . .
Oh, did I ever dispossess myself
And give thee half my kingdom in good will?
What reason moves thee to sorrow for me? (852, 876-77, 889)
- Lear*. I tax you not, you elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription. (III. ii. 16-18)
- v) *Cordella*. (to Gallian King)
O, grieve not you, my Lord, you have no cause (1206)
- Lear*. 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.
- Cordelia*. No cause, no cause (IV. vii. 72-75)

vi) *Perillus*. O just Jehovah, whose almighty power
Doth govern all things in this spacious world,
How canst thou suffer such outrageous acts
To be committed without just revenge? (1597-1600)

Albany. This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge! (IV. ii. 78-80)

vii) *Ragan*. But might I know, that the detested witch
Were certain cause of this uncertain ill,
Myself to France would go in some disguise,
And with these nails scratch out her hateful eyes. (1837-41)

Gloucester. (to Regan)
Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his eyes. (III. vii. 55-56)

Joseph Satin, in *Shakespeare and His Sources*, notes the similarities between Leir's opening speech and Lear's proclamation in the first scene.¹⁰ Satin does not, however, include Cambria's words which are spoken later in the play, words which strongly reinforce the idea of Leir's world weariness in the source play. This weariness is expressed more succinctly by Shakespeare's king:

viii) *Leir*. One foot already hangs in the grave,
And age has made deep furrows in my face:
The world of me, I of the world am weary,
And I would feign resign these earthly cares,
And think upon the welfare of my soul:
Which by no better means may be effected,
Than by resigning up the crown from me
In equal dowry to my daughters three (19-29)

Cambria. (to Cornwall)
Witness these lines: his honorable age,
Being weary of the troubles of his crown,
His princely daughter Ragan will bestow
On me in marriage. (436-39)

Lear. Give me the map there. Know we have divided
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths while we
Unburden'd crawl toward death. (I. i. 36-40)

Robert A. Law draws attention to Perillus's praise of Leir's patience and to Lear's words in Act III, scene ii.¹¹ There are echoes of Perillus's tribute on at least three other occasions in Shakespeare's play. Shakespeare makes even more of the patience motif than does his predecessor. Lear's lack of patience, his tragic flaw according to Lily B. Campbell,¹² sets him apart from Cordelia, who represents the ideal.

- ix) *Perillus*. But he the mirror of mild patience
 Puts up all wrongs, and never gives reply (741-42)
Lear. You Heavens, give me that patience, patience I need:
 (II. iv. 273)
- Lear*. No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
 I will say nothing. (III. ii. 37)
- Kent*. O pity! Sir, where is the patience now
 That you so oft have boasted to retain? (III. vi. 58-59)
- Lear*. (to Gloucester)
 Thou must be patient; we came crying higher. (III. vi. 180)

In the parallels listed thus far there is a resemblance that is readily perceived mainly because there is a key word or phrase that is common to passages in both plays. In the first example it is "tongue," in both passages associated with flattery. In the third example, the phrasing, in the form of a question, is also very similar. In the fourth and sixth examples, Shakespeare has transformed the questions into statements. The assignment of similar words and sentiments to a different character in (ii) is not significant. Cambria and France are both high-ranking members of the nobility. Both are passively good and not central to the actions of their respective plays. The change in (vi) is of greater consequence. Although *Perillus* and Albany are certainly both "good" men, Shakespeare's plain, blunt Kent is not given to making philosophical statements, and so Shakespeare may have deliberately assigned the lines to Albany instead. In the seventh example, Gloucester is given Ragan's line, but the feline imagery describes the same person. Shakespeare's description of Regan is more effective, however, because it is spoken by someone other than herself. It is worth noting two other significant departures from the source in Gloucester's line. Shakespeare attaches his descriptive adjective to "nails," not "eyes." This greatly intensifies Ragan's cruelty. Furthermore, in Gloucester's line Lear's eyes, not Cordelia's, are vulnerable. There is much more emphasis on Lear's blindness in Shakespeare's version.

II

It is possible to single out other parallel passages in which the verbal similarities are not quite so striking. Nevertheless, there is in these passages a clearly recognizable relationship in the image patterns and in the formal and/or thematic structure. It is particularly in these lines that we can observe how Shakespeare heightened or intensified the language of his source.

Let us take as one such example Lear's statement that he is determined to proceed with his plan, that he will not listen to further counsel. There are elements here of Lear's much greater rashness and his more irrational outbursts:

Leir: I am as kind as is the pelican,
 That kills itself, to save her young ones' lives:
 And yet as jealous as the princely eagle,
 That kills her young ones, if they do but dazzle
 Upon the radiant splendor of the sun. (502-506)

Shakespeare's *Lear* also insists that he is kind (I. v. 35 and III. iv. 20), but in *King Lear* it is the daughters who are associated with pelicans (III. iv. 71). Furthermore, Shakespeare's *Lear* describes himself not as the "princely eagle" which, according to Cheriton's fables, preserves and feeds only those eaglets who can gaze at the sun or truth without blinking,¹³ but as a cannibal who kills and eats his own offspring.¹⁴ Shakespeare has, by means of less regal imagery, greatly intensified *Lear*'s rashness and thus has made his threat more ominous:

Lear. The barbarous Scythian
 Or he that makes his generation messes
 To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
 Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,
 As thou my sometime daughter. (I. i. 116-120)

This rash rejection contrasts sharply with *Lear*'s much quieter, more patient exchange with Cordelia in the last scene. It is interesting to note that when *Lear* does take his "sometime daughter" to his bosom again, he uses the *contemptus mundi* language of the saintly hermit, the same language used by Cordella in the source. Cordella, rejected by *Leir*, insists that she can reject the world and find happiness as a palmer's wife:

Cordella. I'll hold thy palmer's staff within my hand,
 And think it is the scepter of a queen.
 Sometimes I'll set my bonnet on my head,
 And think I wear a rich imperial crown.
 Sometimes I'll help thee in thy holy prayers,
 And think I am with thee in Paradise.
 Thus I'll mock fortune, as she mocks me,
 And never will my lovely choice repent;
 For having thee, I shall have all content. (685-694)

It is not until the final act, when *Lear* wonders if he has "caught" Cordelia, that he can speak so religiously, so contemptuously of this world. *Lear*, too, would give up all temporal power for the company of his beloved. Thematically and structurally, *Lear*'s words recall Cordella's words:

Lear. No, no, no, no! 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,
 As if we were God's spies. (V. iii. 8-19)

There are also many structural similarities in the speeches of the evil characters of both plays. There is, of course, no equivalent of Edmund in the old play, but Ragan, at one point, soliloquizes in Edmundian fashion:

Ragan. How may I bless the hour of my nativity,
 Which bodes unto me such happy stars!
 How may I thank kind fortune, that vouchsafes
 To all my actions, such desired event!
 I rule the King of Cambria as I please:
 The states are all obedient to my will;
 And look what ere I say, it shall be so;
 Not anyone that dares answer no. (909-926)

One might compare this with Edmund's Machiavellian boasting in Act I, scene ii:

Edmund. This is the excellent foppery of the world,
 that, when we are sick in fortune, often the
 surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty
 of our disasters the sun, the moon, and
 stars. . . My father compounded with
 my mother under the dragon's tail, and
 my nativity was under *Ursa major*; so
 that it follows I am rough and lecherous.
 Fut! I should have been that I am had
 the maidenliest star in the firmament
 twinkled on my bastardizing.

Ragan feels that she was born to rule. Edmund is determined to rule in spite of his low birth. But the gloating of both is remarkably similar:

Edmund. A credulous father, and a brother noble,
 Whose nature is so far from doing harms
 That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
 My practices ride easy! I see the business;
 Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:
 All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. (I. ii. 186-192)

Such willfulness is the very antithesis of the humility and obedience expressed in Cordella's and Cordelia's prayers. Cordelia's actual words may only faintly recall Cordella's, but the resemblance in thematic structure is still recognizable. Cordella speaks the following lines as she, unobserved, watches her father refresh himself with food and drink:

Cordella. And may that draught be unto him, as was
That which old Aeson drank, which did renew
His withered age, and made him young again,
And may that meat be unto him, as was
That which Elias ate, in strength whereof
He walked forty days, and never fainted.
Shall I conceal me longer from my father?
Or shall I manifest myself to him? (2120-2128)

Shakespeare's Cordelia utters her prayer not while Lear eats but while he sleeps. There are fewer words but a greater intensity of feeling in her lines:

Cordelia. O you kind Gods,
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O! wind up
Of this child-changed father. (IV. vii. 14-17)

Both Cordella and Cordelia are selfless in their praise of the man who, in both plays, best exemplifies the noble ideal of service.

Cordella. And now (dear father) welcome to our court,
And welcome (kind Perillus) unto me
Mirror of virtue and true honesty.

Leir. O, he hath been the kindest friend to me,
That ever man had in adversity. (2265-2269)

Cordelia. O thou good Kent! how shall I live and work
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me. (IV. vii. 1-3)

It is significant that, in Shakespeare's tragedy, Lear never does join in the tribute. In Shakespeare's *King Lear* there is little of the poetic justice which is such a large part of the source play and the tradition of romantic comedy.¹⁵

One more resemblance should be noted. Late in the old play, Cambria dispatches messengers to search for Leir, who with Perillus, is about to join forces with Cordella and the Gallian king:

Cambria. My Lords, let everywhere light-horse be sent,
To scour about through all our regiment.
Dispatch a post immediately to Cornwall,
To see if any news be of him there
Myself will make a strict enquiry here;
And all about our cities near at hand,
Till certain news of his abode be brought. (1819-1825)

In Shakespeare's play Cordelia similarly instructs soldiers to find her father:

Cordelia. . . . A century send forth.
Search every acre in the high-grown field,
And bring him to our eye. (IV. iv. 6-8)

Cordelia has just described Lear "As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud; / Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds" (IV. iv. 2-3), and so it is appropriate that Lear be sought in the countryside. In the preceding scene, however, Kent informs us that "the poor distressed Lear's i' the town" (IV. iii. 39). It is possible that, in the earlier scene, Shakespeare recalled Cambria's reference to "cities."

As can be seen from the examples just cited, certain high moments in the old play, Leir's threat, Ragan's boast, but, above all, Cordella's prayer and speech of self-denial appear in somewhat altered form in Shakespeare's tragedy. Edmund and Ragan speak similarly, and the chastened, redeemed Lear echoes Cordella.

Sometimes Shakespeare abridges what are rather long passages in the old play. One such example, already cited, is Cordella's prayer for her father's recovery. Another instance of this can be found in Act IV, scene ii. where Albany finally takes a moral stand and condemns Goneril's actions:

Albany. O Goneril!
 You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
 Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:
 That nature, which contemns its origin,
 Cannot be border'd certain in itself;
 She that herself will sliver and disbranch
 From her material sap, perforce must wither
 and come to deadly use.¹⁶ (IV. ii. 29-36)

The last three lines of this speech are a masterful compression of a much more elaborate image pattern in the chronicle play. Leir introduces the image at the beginning of the love test:

Leir. Dear Gonorill, kind Ragan, sweet Cordella,
 Ye flourishing branches of a kingly stock,
 Sprung from a tree that once did flourish green,
 Whose blossoms now are nipped with winter's frost,
 And pale grim death doth wait upon my steps,
 And summons me unto his next assizes. (220-225)

When Cordella takes a husband, it is only appropriate that she should "cleave" to him in the biblical sense. In the following exchange, Cordella and her husband further elaborate this imagery:

Cordella. Let not my passions move your mind a whit;
 For I am bound by nature to lament
 For his ill will, that life to me first lent.
 If so the stock be dried with disdain,
 Withered and sere the branches must remain.

King. But thou art now graft in another stock
 I am the stock and thou the lovely branch:
 And from my root continual sap shall flow,
 To make thee flourish with perpetual spring. (1207-1215)

The compression of all this imagery in Albany's speech to Goneril may well have been deliberate. Shakespeare wished to emphasize the dying process, the reality of death, in his tragedy and so he deleted the more obvious images of renewal or spring. However, the tree in whose hollow Edgar hides (II. iii.) and the tree in whose shade he places Gloucester (V. ii.) provide subtle hints of the possibility of redemption.¹⁷ In his romances, Shakespeare returns to the tree emblem and develops the regeneration theme more fully.¹⁸

The language of the old play is by no means always abridged or compressed in Shakespeare's. Shakespeare elaborates and complicates such terms as "patience" and "just" or "justice" which also recur in the source. Leir learns patience rather quickly,¹⁹ and the ending satisfies any audience's desire to see justice done. Shakespeare's Lear learns patience slowly. Shakespeare's play presents many contradictory views on the gods and on justice. There are few ambiguities or uncertainties in the old play.

III.

How much was Shakespeare influenced by the "characters" in the old play? Goneril and Regan are much like their counterparts in the source, although Shakespeare has made them even more cruel, in spite of the fact that they do not seek to kill their father. The attempted murder of Leir and Perillus does not succeed, whereas the blinding of Gloucester does. Shakespeare's evil sisters do indeed "turn monsters" (III. vii. 101) as they prey upon one another in Act V, scene iii.²⁰

There is no character in the old play who has a dramatic role resembling that of the fool in *King Lear*. Mumford is a jester of sorts, but he is never in the company of King Leir. His chief function seems to be to entertain the audience with an occasional bawdy pun. He is, in fact, more like the vice of the moralities than he is like any of the fools in Shakespeare's plays. In any case, he never poses a real threat to the virtuous characters, and his appearance on stage with Cordella, late in the play (ll. 1759-1814), may simply have been meant to make Cordella seem less saintly, more human.

A number of critics have compared and contrasted the central characters of the two plays. S. Nagarajan has commented on the various ways in which Shakespeare's protagonist differs from his less heroic counterpart in the old play.²¹ Significantly, he points to Shakespeare's use of Gloucester to make King Lear appear greater. Gloucester, he says, lacks Lear's ability to learn because he is less sensitive. "This intense sensitiveness to the pain of life and inexhaustible capacity to put up with it is the distinction of the tragic hero."²² It should be pointed out, however, that sensitivity and capacity for pain and suffering are not enough to make King Lear the tragic figure that he is. Lear suffers but he also refuses to acquiesce; throughout the play he is the

questioner. He is still the questioner at the very end when he must face the horrible reality of Cordelia's murder. As R. Sewall has shown, Lear, like Job and Prometheus, is the unconventional, larger-than-life figure who arouses in us the "original terror"²³ as he continues to "fight against his destiny, to kick against the pricks."²⁴ And, while "the great rage / ... is killed in him" (IV. vii. 78-79), Lear does continue to ask why, unlike Gloucester who is brought by suffering to the state in which he accepts his lot and meekly says, "henceforth I'll bear / Affliction till it do cry out itself / 'Enough, enough,' and die" (IV. vi. 75-77). One might compare this with Leir's acquiescence when he believes he is about to be murdered by Ragan's messenger: "Now, Lord, receive me, for I come to Thee / And die, I hope in perfect charity" (1617-18). In his sudden reversals and in his piety, Gloucester more closely resembles the Leir of the old play than does Lear.

It is true that Leir in the source play has little of the rage or overpowering language of Shakespeare's tragic hero. On the other hand, one must not ignore the hints and suggestions the chronicle play provided for Shakespeare's conception of the central character, even in terms of the language. The numerous verbal parallels that have been cited over the years are evidence of this. As already noted, Shakespeare can expand or amplify as well as compress or abridge. He certainly makes the most of Leir's "sudden strategem" (76), of Leir's brief curses (308-310 and 2513-2514) and the suggestions that extreme grief or extreme joy can lead to madness (2017 and 2130).

Of all the so-called "good" characters, Shakespeare's Kent and Cordelia are most like their counterparts in the source play. Because Leir does not sin as much as Lear, because his rage is never as extreme, Perillus, unlike Kent, is never banished. Perillus's devotion to duty is also recognized, as pointed out earlier, in keeping with poetic justice and a happy ending.

Except for her very different fate, Shakespeare's Cordelia is in many ways similar to Cordella. Both represent total devotion to truth and loyalty. Cordella, again more obviously than Cordelia, is unswervingly loyal to both father and husband. In keeping with the play as a whole, Cordella is more pious. Nowhere does Cordelia have a speech like Cordella's, 11. 1038-1069. This speech ends with the lines, "I will to church, and pray unto my Savior, / That ere I die I may obtain his favor." Nevertheless, both pray for the recovery of their fathers, as noted above. In his characterization of Cordelia, more than anywhere else, Shakespeare has been economical with language. Cordelia is given less than half the number of lines Cordella has.²⁵ In this way Shakespeare has equated her with an active virtue that does not necessarily express itself in words. Cordella, at times, almost "protests too much."

In the source play much is made of Cordella's beauty. Ragan speaks of "the glory of her mounting fame" (109), and her many suitors. The Gallian

king says he has never seen a "fairer creature" (584) and knows she is mortal, and not a goddess, only because he overhears her "complain / On fortune, and the unkindness of her father" (1243-44). Shakespeare is more subtle in his characterization. Practically all the references to Cordelia's beauty are to her virtue, an inner quality which is not universally acclaimed. When she is deprived of her dowry, her material wealth, Lear sees only "that little-seeming substance" (I. i. 198), whereas she was earlier, according to France, Lear's "best object, / The argument of his praise, balm of his age, / the best, the dearest. . . ." (I. i. 214-216). France, who does perceive Cordelia's inner beauty, describes her as "fairest Cordelia" but lays claim to her "virtues" (I. i. 250 & 252). In Act IV, scene ii, we hear of her "delicate cheek" and her tears, but her "fame" rests on her ability to be "a queen / Over her passion" (IV. iii. 14-15).

While no such profound concept of beauty is developed in the portrait of Cordella, it must be said that, like Cordelia, she clearly symbolizes the natural, as opposed to the unnatural forces in the play. Cordella even passes a second love-test, as it were, for when the Gallian king, her husband, counsels her to forget her unkind father, she demurs, saying, "Yet pardon me, my gracious Lord, in this: / For what can stop the course of nature's power?" (1231-32).

IV.

A comparison of the stage business in the two plays probably illustrates best how Shakespeare was able to transcend his source by either elaborating or abridging the original material. The kneeling scene in the source play is ludicrously overdone, as Kenneth Muir and others have pointed out.²⁶ In the space of fifty lines, Cordella kneels and rises twice, while Leir kneels and rises three times. Shakespeare retained the scene but he made it much more effective dramatically. Not only is there less literal kneeling and rising in Shakespeare's play, but the kneeling and the references to kneeling are not restricted to a single scene. Cordelia kneels in spirit, if not in fact, when she utters her prayer to the gods for Lear's recovery in Act IV, scene vii, and again when she kisses him a few lines further on. The best example of this inner humility, of which kneeling is only a symbolic gesture, is found in the following lines:

Cordelia. O! look upon me, Sir,
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.
No, Sir, you must not kneel. (IV. vii. 56-58)

This simultaneous, symbolic kneeling is infinitely more effective than the alternate, mechanical kneeling in the chronicle play. Shakespeare returns to this symbolic gesture again in Lear's "Come, let's away to prison" speech. Lear

expresses the hope that they be allowed to go on kneeling to one another, a hope that is not fulfilled: "When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down, / And ask of thee forgiveness" (V. iii. 10-11).

Dorothy Nameri discusses at some length the use of disguise in the two plays. Shakespeare, as Nameri points out, makes the disguises part of his overall theme of appearance and reality.²⁷ What is universally overlooked by critics, however, is Shakespeare's equally successful use of letters and messages. He greatly elaborates this device which is operative almost entirely on the level of plot in the older drama. In Shakespeare's play there are more than twice as many references to letters and at least twice as many scenes in which letters play an important role. There are letters the contents of which are revealed to us and there are letters which remain mysteriously secret. Generally, it is the contents of the evil letters that are made known to the audience, beginning with the letter Edmund pockets with such "terrible dispatch" (a play on words?) in Act I, scene ii, and ending with the "paper" which Albany threatens to use to "stopple" Goneril's mouth in Act V, scene iii. It is by means of a letter that Gloucester is abused and Edgar is dishonoured. It is by letter that Cordelia is informed of Lear's plight and it is by means of a purloined letter that Albany finally comes to "see" Goneril for what she is and is moved to action, albeit too late. In short, letters are used to distort the truth as well as to reveal it. Used in this way, the letter device is integrally linked to the themes of justice and knowledge. There is no such artistic use of the letter device in the source play. Shakespeare certainly had the final letter scene of the old play in mind when he had Albany ask Goneril, "Know'st thou this paper?" (V. iii. 160).²⁸ But there is nothing in the old play to match Goneril's reply: "Ask me not what I know" (V. iii. 161). Goneril's "knowledge," like that of the other evil characters, leads to the fall and not to redemption.

V.

The closest similarities between the two plays can be found in the numerous verbal echoes. Shakespeare obviously recalled many of the images and even entire lines from the older play. Some of the longer speeches in Shakespeare's play are also similar in structure to set speeches in the source. Nevertheless, Shakespeare often uses this same language much more skillfully than his predecessor. A word like "patience" becomes part of the larger theme of self-discovery. Likewise, a few brief references to madness in the old play evolve into a pattern that runs throughout Shakespeare's tragedy.

Many of the characters from the source play have undergone a remarkable transformation in Shakespeare. The evil sisters, Gonorill and Ragan, are made more evil through their cruelty. Cordelia becomes even

more saintly than Cordella because of her death. King Leir, though impulsive and stubborn in the early scenes, is a lamenting, pious and somewhat pathetic old man throughout the rest of the action. Shakespeare's Lear is, of course, far more complex and arouses more ambivalent responses in the audience. King Lear becomes a study of "extremes," an idea merely hinted at in the chronicle play (11. 2017 & 2130). These extremes, rage and resignation, "matter and impertinency mix'd; / Reason in madness" (IV. vi. 171-172), paradoxically give Lear his heroic stature.

Shakespeare is also far more adept than his predecessor in his handling of stage business. By abridging the actual kneeling in the reconciliation scene, Shakespeare firmly controls the visual effects, using them only to reinforce the sentiments expressed. The letters, on the other hand, are greatly increased in number. They are used not only to deceive but also to enlighten. Furthermore, they are more closely linked to the themes of blindness and self-discovery. The same letter ultimately exposes the evil characters and rouses the good to action.

It is clear from the foregoing that, while Shakespeare did not follow the old play slavishly, he made greater use of this source than is often recognized. Shakespeare may unconsciously have incorporated some of the elements of his source into his play, as Greg suggests. However, many of the subtle changes he made in the language, the characters and the stage business were probably quite conscious, necessitated by the requirements of tragedy. A close study of the two plays reveals how imaginatively Shakespeare utilized his primary source.

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Notes

¹See T.P. Logan and D.S. Smith, eds., *The Predecessors of Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), p. 222. "Most scholars since 1920 have agreed that *Leir* is a *Lear* source, but have disagreed on its importance as source material and on how Shakespeare came to utilize it." A.S. Cairncross in *The Problem of Hamlet: A Solution* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1936) and Peter Alexander in *Shakespeare* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), date the anonymous play later than Shakespeare's and thus deny all such influence.

²Wilfrid Perrett, in *The Story of King Lear from Geoffrey Monmouth to Shakespeare* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1904), p. 274, argues that too much has been made of verbal resemblances between these two plays.

³*Ibid.*, p. 282.

⁴W.R. Elton, in *King Lear and the Gods* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1966), discusses at length the influence of Sidney's *Arcadia*. For the parallels between Shakespeare's King Lear and Montaigne, see George C. Taylor, *Shakespeare's Debt to Montaigne* (New York: Phaeton Press, 1925) and W.B. Drayton Henderson, "Montaigne's *Apologie of Raymond Sebond* and *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, 14, Oct., 1939, 209-225 and 15, Jan., 1940, 40-54.

⁵W.W. Greg, "The Date of *King Lear* and Shakespeare's Use of Earlier Versions of the Story," *The Library*, 20 (1940), 386.

⁶*Ibid.*, 386-397.

⁷*Ibid.* For a summary of the various views held over the past fifty years regarding Shakespeare's knowledge of the old play, see T.P. Logan and D.S. Smith. E.K. Chambers theorizes that Shakespeare was relying on his memory of a performance. W.W. Greg thinks Shakespeare could have seen the old play performed but may also have read it in manuscript. Hardin Craig says Shakespeare might have acted in a production of the source play. Kenneth Muir, noting the numerous parallels in Shakespeare's play with Perillus scenes in the source, suggests that Shakespeare could have played Perillus. See Kenneth Muir, ed., *William Shakespeare, King Lear, The Arden Edition* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1956), p. xxxii.

⁸Wilfrid Perrett, p. 276.

⁹For a discussion of verbal parallels, see W.W. Greg, "The Date of *King Lear*," Robert Adger Law, "*King Lear* and *King Lear*: An Examination of the Two Plays," in *Studies in Honor of T.W. Baldwin*, ed. Don Cameron Allen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958), Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1957) and Dorothy Nameri, *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear* (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1976).

All references to *The True Chronicle History of King Lear and his Three Daughters* are to Joseph Sabin's edition, in Joseph Sabin, *Shakespeare and his Sources* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966).

All references to Shakespeare's *King Lear* are to the Arden Edition, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1952). I have compared all passages cited from this modern edition with the Folio and First Quarto texts.

¹⁰Joseph Sabin, p. 459.

¹¹Robert Adger Law, "*King Lear* and *King Lear*: An Examination of the Two Plays," p. 113.

Also see Greg, 388.

¹²Lily Bess Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1930). See Chapter 14: "*King Lear*: A Tragedy of Wrath in Old Age," pp. 175-207. Campbell quotes from John Downname's *Spiritual Physicke* (1601) STC 7147.

¹³For a fuller account of Cheriton's fable, see Dorothy Nameri, *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁴See Michael Schmidt, "Cannibalism in *King Lear*," *Notes and Queries*, n.s. 18 (1971), 148-149. Schmidt argues that Shakespeare drew here upon the scene in the old play in which Perillus offers his flesh to the starving king. See 11. 2058-2061 of the source play.

¹⁵Robert Adger Law, pp. 122-124.

¹⁶Only the first sentence of this speech appears in the Folio text.

¹⁷See Robert W. Uphaus, "Shakespearean Tragedy and the Intimations of Romance," *Centennial Review*, 22 (1978), 299-318. Uphaus insists that the action moves toward romance and regeneration after Act IV.

For a similar view, see David Ormerod, "The Shadow of this Tree: Fall and Redemption in *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 113 (1977), 186-189.

¹⁸William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale, The Arden Edition*, ed. J.H.P. Pafford (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1963), I. i. 21-24.

¹⁹Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* Vol. 7 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 282.

²⁰Thomas McNeal, in "Shakespeare's Cruel Queens," *HLQ*, 22 (1958-59), 45-50, contends that all of Shakespeare's cruel women are modelled upon the cruel sisters of the *Lear* play.

²¹S. Nagarajan, "*King Lear* and *King Lear*," in *Studies in English Literature, Festschrift to Professor G.C. Bannerjee*, ed. P.S. Sastri (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co. Ltd., 1972), pp. 39-40.

R. Perkinson, in "Shakespeare's Revision of the Lear Story and the Structure of *King Lear*," *PQ*, 22 (1943), 315-329, also comments on Shakespeare's departure from his source in the tragic handling of his characters.

²²S. Nagarajan, pp. 39-40.

²³Richard B. Sewall, *The Vision of Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 73.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁵Shakespeare's Cordelia has just over 100 lines while Cordella in the old play has over 230.

²⁶In his introduction to the Arden Edition, p. xxx, Kenneth Muir says, "In the old play *Lear*

and Cordella keep on kneeling and rising until the scene topples over into absurdity." Dorothy Nameri, in *Three Versions of the Story of King Lear*, p. 50, comments on the melodramatic quality of the kneeling scene in the source play.

²⁷See Dorothy Nameri, pp. 65-70.

²⁸In the source play, Leir asks Ragan, "Knowest thou these letters?" (1215).

BRUTUS' MOTIVATION AND MELANCHOLY

By W. Nicholas Knight

*Ant. He [Octavius] at Phillippi kept
His sword e'en like a dancer, while I struck
The lean and wrinkled Cassius; and 'twas I
That the mad Brutus ended.*

Antony and Cleopatra, III. xi. 35-38

Kittredge, in a footnote to Antony's reference to the madness of Brutus, writes:

Though Antony had spoken a noble and appreciative valediction over Brutus's body at the end of *Julius Caesar*, he regarded him as an unbalanced enthusiast.¹

Despite the fact that the reference to Brutus' madness is from *Antony and Cleopatra*, Kittredge applies his statement to the Antony of *Julius Caesar*. The following will explore in terms of revenge convention the implications of the view that Brutus became a "mad" man. And from the text of *Julius Caesar* we will attempt to determine to what extent and in what ways Brutus' madness is indicated.

The revenge hero of *Caesar's Revenge*, a possible source for Shakespeare's Brutus, is explicitly referred to as melancholic. Cassius encounters Brutus, much as he does at the beginning of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

*The times drawe neere by gracious heavens
When Philips Sonne must fall in Babilon,
In his triumphing proud persumption:
But see where melancholy Brutus walkes,
Whose minde is hammering on no meane conceit:
Then sound him Cassius, see how he is inclined,
How fares young Brutus in this tottering state.
(III.ii.sig. E⁴ verso)*

When Cassius comes upon Brutus at the beginning of *Julius Caesar*, Brutus admits ". . . that poor Brutus [is], with himself at war, . . ." (I.ii.46). The "tottering state" in *Caesar's Revenge*, refers to the political situation. This ethos is internalized by Shakespeare as ". . . the state of. . . man. . ." in Brutus' psyche. During the action it is Brutus' being which ". . . suffers. . ./The nature of an insurrection" (II.i.67-69). It is not happenstance that the only final tribute to come from one on Brutus' side at the end is Strato's defiant, but perceptive, statement to Antony just before Antony's eulogy: ". . . Brutus only [alone] overcame himself, . . ." (V.v.56). On the structural level, Shakespeare

has Brutus enter at war with himself and leave the action having overcome himself. The external political situation is the backdrop for the essential tragic action, that of Brutus' internal struggle: a struggle which he deals with alone, despite the protestations of Portia and the comradeship of Cassius.

The mental conflict and stress Brutus and Cassius experience uncovers melancholic conditions in both these chief instruments of Pompey's revenge. Portia describes Brutus as having fits of melancholy:

Brutus. It is not for your health thus to commit
Your weak condition to the raw cold morning.

Portia. Nor for yours neither. Y'have ungently, Brutus,
Stole from my bed. And yesternight at supper
You suddenly arose and walked about,
Musing and sighing with your arms across; . . .²

Later, melancholy is mentioned in Messala's analysis for the origin of Cassius' mistake.

Mistrust of good success hath done this deed.
O hateful Error, Melancholy's child,
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men
The things that are not?

(V.i. 66-69)

The last two lines are similar to Macbeth's

Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.

(I.iii.137-142)

In turn, Macbeth's speech is not unlike Brutus' "phantasma" soliloquy. All three statements are evidence for a melancholia in Cassius, Brutus and Macbeth (cf. "dagger speech" and "Then comes my fit again." [III. iv. 21]) similar to that of Hamlet (cf. II. ii. 262, 627-632). If this interpretation is correct, then Shakespeare has definitely introduced a melancholic revenger prior to Marston's *Malcontent* (1600-1604), in *Julius Caesar* (1599).

Shakespeare has a basis in his source for the melancholy in Cassius and Brutus. In Plutarch, a physiological identification between Brutus and Cassius is made:

. . . fat long-haired men [Antonius and Dolabella] made him
[Caesar] not afraid, but the lean and whitely-faced fellows,
meaning that by Brutus and Cassius.³

Further, Plutarch tells us that Cassius was a "choleric" man and that he had a momentary fit just before the assassination.

It is also reported that Cassius—though otherwise he did favour the doctrine of Epicurus—beholding the image of Pompey before they entered into the action of their traitorous enterprise, he did softly call upon it to aid him. But the instant danger of the present time, taking away his former reason, did suddenly put him into a furious passion and made him like a man half beside himself.

(p. 92)

It is noteworthy that in this report the presence of Pompey's statue (like the presence of King Hamlet's ghost in *Hamlet*), causes the revenger of that figure to become distracted.

Plutarch records several illnesses on the part of Brutus, both before Pharsalia (p. 104), and after the assassination (pp. 134-135). Shakespeare (II. i), and Plutarch (pp. 116-117), alike show Portia concerned about Brutus' health. Plutarch offers evidence of a pathological approach in Brutus' handling of any situation. He tells us that when Brutus' gravity and constant mind

was moved to follow any matter, he used a kind of forcible and vehement persuasion that calmed not till he had obtained his desire.

(p. 107)

Thus Shakespeare had ample material in North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* to suggest that Cassius and Brutus experienced, or had symptoms of, physical strain and mental unbalance.

Plutarch is the source for Brutus' melancholia, his "It must be by his death" soliloquy, and his famous "phantasma" speech. After the spirit in Plutarch appears to Brutus before Philippi, Cassius offers an explanation. The passage is quoted in its entirety to indicate passages Shakespeare uses in *Julius Caesar*, its relationship to Renaissance theories pertaining to melancholia and symptoms parallel to Hamlet's condition, all to be discussed subsequently.

. . . we do not always feel or see that which we suppose we do both see and feel; but that our senses being credulous, and therefore easily abused, when they are idle and unoccupied in their own objects, are induced to imagine they see and conjecture that which they in truth do not. For our mind is quick and cunning to work, without either cause or matter, anything in the imagination whatsoever. And therefore the imagination is resembled to clay, and the mind to the potter, who, without any other cause than his fancy and pleasure, changeth it into what fashion and form he will. [Brutus: "I know. . .no. . .cause. . ./Fashion it thus. . ." (II. i. 11, 30)] And this doth the diversity of our dreams show unto us. For our imagination doth upon a small fancy grow from conceit to conceit, altering both in passions and forms of things imagined. For the mind of man is ever occupied and that continual moving is nothing but an imagination. But yet there is a further cause of this in you.

For, you being by nature given to melancholic discoursing, and of late continually occupied, your wits and senses having been overlaboured do easlier yield to such imaginations. For, to say that there are spirits or angels, and if there were, that they had the shape of men, or such voices, or any power at all to come unto us, it is a mockery.

(pp. 149-150)

Shakespeare has dramatized the above analysis by Cassius of Brutus' imaginings in *Julius Caesar* (II. i.) *before* the assassination. In other words, the dramatist has moved the mental disturbances in Brutus from Plutarch's position after the assassination to an anterior and, hence, causal position in the play. Thus Brutus' phantasmas and hideous dreams appear, not as the result of guilt but, as he contemplates the act and fashions his purposes, *prior* to the murder. Brutus' area of motivation is, then, embedded in a world of fancy, dreams, and melancholy.

In addition to being sleepless during the campaigns, Brutus enters as such in Act II: "What, Lucius, ho!/I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly." (II. i. 1, 4). Later after the conspirators have departed, Brutus concerns himself with Lucius again, in a similar but more specific contrast:

Boy! Lucius! Fast asleep? It is no matter.
Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber.
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies
Which busy care draws in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

(II. i. 229-233)

Brutus hides these fantasies from the conspirators, as he hides his internal insurrection from himself in his offered rationalizations and substitution of metaphors for motives in attempted justification for the proposed murder, but Portia sees through the mask and bears witness to the underlying, though not the former, Brutus.

Following Brutus' speech on his imaginings, Portia enters and uncovers Brutus' madness. She had hoped Brutus' impatience with her". . . was but an effect of humor, / Which sometime hath his hour with every man." (II. i. 250-251) But she finds it is something else:

It will not let you eat nor talk nor sleep,
And could it work so much upon your shape
As it hath much prevailed on your condition,
I should not know your Brutus.

(II. i. 252-255)

Portia sees in Brutus the identical symptoms that Claudius sees in Hamlet and describes to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was.

(II. ii. 4-7)

Each relative attempts to search out the causes and offers remedies.

Brutus attributes his problem merely to illness. But Portia will not be put off:

Is Brutus sick, and is it physical
To walk unbraced and suck up the humors
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed
To dare the vile contagion of the night,
And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air?⁴
To add unto his sickness? No, my Brutus,
You have some sick offense within your mind,

(II. i. 261-268)
(italics mine)

Brutus has indeed some sick offense within his mind which he is compounding, not remedying, by his ventures even though he would have it otherwise. The entrance at this point of Caius Ligarius, Pompey's follower, emphasizes Brutus' predicament. The sick Brutus thinks the remedy is in his decision for "A piece of work that will make sick men whole" (II. i. 327), and Ligarius miraculously discards his own sickness in Brutus' presence. Yet the ironic fact of the matter is that Brutus has been *adding* to his sickness as he continues to move farther away from ". . . his wholesome bed / To dare the vile contagion of the night, . . ." Portia later says to Lucius after Brutus has gone to the Capitol, ". . . he went sickly forth. . ." (II. iv. 14).

Portia's diagnosis of Brutus' melancholia, which Plutarch has Cassius give, is only a further explication of Brutus' own self-analysis in the same scene:

Since Cassius first did whet me against Caesar,
I have not slept.
Between the acting of a dreadful thing
And the first motion, all the interim is
Like a phantasma or a hideous dream.
The genius and the mortal instruments
Are then in council, and the state of a man,
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then
The nature of an insurrection.

(II. i. 61-69)

This is Brutus' version of Hamlet's ". . . I have bad dreams."⁵

Brutus' words do not, indeed, come from a man whose elements are in

balance. Just as Brutus will hide his "figures" and "fantasies" from the conspirators, so has he, during his seemingly rational deliberation in the "It must be by his death" soliloquy, already hidden from himself the presence of the phantasma or hideous dream.

Brutus' soliloquy, which contains his reasons for Caesar's death, has bothered critics from Coleridge on.⁶ Coleridge confesses to puzzlement: "This is singular—at least I do not at present see into Shakespeare's motive, the *rationale*—or in what point he meant Brutus' character to appear." "What character does Shakespeare mean *his* Brutus to be?"⁷ Coleridge is right in pointing out that it is at this point that we are dealing with Shakespeare's Brutus, not Plutarch's.⁸ Granville-Barker attributes the confusion of the critics to Shakespeare's own inadequacy and lack of clarity: "It may be that Shakespeare himself is still fumbling to discover how this right-minded man can commit his conscience to murder, and why should his Brutus not be fumbling too?"⁹ For the most part, and rightly so, the critics acknowledge Shakespeare's conscious artistry and see the soliloquy as Brutus' "lack of judgment"¹⁰ and as symptomatic of his "self-deception."¹¹ Some are willing to call it "muddle-headedness,"¹² others, "rationalization."¹³ Most assume that ". . . he decides to kill Caesar for no existing reason,"¹⁴ or without possible justification.¹⁵ A political idealist could hardly act as Brutus does or, if Brutus is one, he is first of all insane. Ludowyk has the right approach when he refers to the soliloquy in the following manner: "The argument is that of a man in a state of distraction."¹⁶ Indeed, Brutus' rationalizations come from a nature which is in insurrection against itself and fraught with figures, fantasies, phantasmas, and hideous dreams.

Brutus' soliloquy (II. i. 10-34), despite its seeming calculation, uses figures and phantasmas to cover reality. The soliloquy itself does not present the process by which he arrives at the necessity for Caesar's death. This necessity is already a foregone conclusion,¹⁷ for Brutus' speech begins with, "It must be by his death. . . ." (II. i. 10). His words then deal with the rationalized justification.

Motivation cannot be consciously localized in any animosity. The reasons must be non-personal:

. . . and for my part,
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,
But for the general.

Thus, the reasoning becomes conjectural and appears in the future or conditional tenses:

He would be crowned.
How that might change his nature, there's the question.

(Note that it is not the answer.) The question gives rise to an answering figure or conceit.

It is the bright day that brings forth the adder,
And that craves wary walking.

Brutus confuses the real, but nonetheless future, situation with his metaphor or fantasy: "Crown him?—that;—"18 Here the speaker has an opportunity to continue in his conjectures in terms of Caesar's past cruelties, but:

And then I grant we put a sting in him
That at his will he may do danger with.

Once fantasy has been firmly joined with reality, or, to put it another way, reality successfully hidden by fantasy, Brutus turns to additional generalizations.

Th'abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins
Remorse from power.

True, but Brutus is a living example of Caesar's mercies. Admitting that Caesar has never been unreasonable, Brutus undercuts his own generalization:

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

Yet Brutus also forgets that he is "Caesar's angel" (III. ii. 181) and that Caesar selected him as Chief Praetor.¹⁹

If the rejected generalization will not work, or Brutus cannot make it work, he tries another shift. He returns to an imagined figure, attributing to it a generalized acceptance.

But 'tis a common proof
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,
Whereto the climber upward turns his face;
But when he once attains the upmost round,
He then unto the ladder turns his back,
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees
By which he did ascend.

Brutus ignores the awards Caesar made to at least four members of the conspiracy²⁰; furthermore, the inappropriateness of this metaphor to Caesar is brought forth in Antony's funeral oration (III. ii. 88-89), and in his disclosure of Caesar's will (11. 241-251). Ironically the metaphor applies to Brutus' own dialectic.

With excitement and release Brutus completes an extended metaphor satisfactorily, not realizing that his fantasies and building "from conceit to conceit," as Cassius says in Plutarch, have led him into the clouds and far beyond the degrees by which reason would ascend. He, then, conditionally applies the completed fantasy to his victim: "So Caesar may." Circular reasoning completes the rationalization: "Then, lest he may, prevent." Later in the scene, Cassius offers precisely this reasoning for the removal of Antony, who ironically does become a threat.

We shall find of him
A shrewd contriver; and you know, his means,
If he improve them, may well stretch so far
As to annoy us all; which to prevent,
Let Antony and Caesar fall together.

(II. i. 157-161)

Brutus first denounces this reasoning with, "Our course will seem too bloody, . . ." (1. 162). But then, to provide an answer, he produces another figure or fantasy about Antony's being a limb of Caesar.²¹

The closing lines of the soliloquy indicate, by Brutus' own statements, to what extent his reasons are founded on no present reality. He is totally dependent upon his figures and fantasies to support the execution:

And since the quarrel
Will bear no color for the thing he is,
Fashion it thus: . . .

This is the "richest alchemy" which Casca sees Brutus' countenance giving their offence, and for which Cassius has wrought Brutus' honorable mettle. Brutus fulfills his function willingly when he asks Metellus Cimber to send Caius Ligarius to him ". . .and I'll fashion him" (II. i. 220). What Brutus would fashion the act to, or in response to, is even more vague than his preceding remarks: ". . .that what he is, augmented, / Would run to these and these extremities. . . ." Brutus does not continue with real abuses, or genuine criticism, but returns to complete the original figure of the adder which commenced the metaphoric reasoning.

And therefore think him as a serpent's egg,
Which, hatched, would as his kind grow mischievous,
And kill him in the shell.

Thus, Shakespeare frames the soliloquy with nothing but a fantasy, an image, which is based, not on reality, but on the conditional tense and a succession of figures or conceits.

Coleridge asks precisely the questions Brutus' soliloquy was designed to

elicit. Are these Brutus' reasons? Had Caesar not passed the Rubicon? Had he not "Entered Rome as a conqueror? Placed his Gauls in the Senate?" (Coleridge, p. 245), to which could be added in the terms of the play, triumphed over Pompey's blood? By omitting these facts, Shakespeare has portrayed Brutus as a man at war with himself; vexed with passions of some difference; operating out of a phantasma; as one whose state is suffering the nature of an insurrection, and one who has some sick offense within his mind, which prevails upon his condition.

Brutus' rationalization, metaphors, and self-deception are the result of the fantasies and figures he complains of, which Portia has diagnosed and which are the same type of melancholy as Hamlet's. Polonius' report of Hamlet's mental states can be applied to those of Brutus, even to the extent of experiencing figures, conceits, and phantasmas.

And he, repelled—a short tale to make—
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and by this declension
Into the madness wherein now he raves. . . .

(II. ii. 146-150)

Brutus passes through this very declension as his cogitations and musings do not allow him to display his former gentleness and love; they will not let him eat or sleep; they work upon his weak condition. Dover Wilson reads "lightness" in Polonius' speech as referring to a light-headedness or "delirious fancies," (p. 211), and thus they are analogous to Brutus' hideous dream.

This reading of Brutus' soliloquy, then, supports Antony's boast that he vanquished "the mad Brutus," Kittredge's suggestion that Brutus is "unbalanced," and Ludowyk's statement that the "argument is that of a man in a state of distraction." Evidence of Brutus' madness comes from his own self-diagnosis and that of fellow characters, from a Shakespearean character in a play other than *Julius Caesar*, from the source of the play, and from editorial and critical statements.

Shakespeare has, indeed, made his Brutus different from Plutarch's. Although he is in no way violating his source, he emphasizes certain suggestions and avoids others. We see this in his use of Brutus' melancholy. The fact that Cassius and Brutus have "lost their reason" is finally characterized by Antony's servant at the end of the oration: ". . . Brutus and Cassius / Are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome" (III. ii. 268-269). Hence, in the use of theatrical insanity, Brutus corresponds to the mad assassin, the melancholy revenger. Brutus, by his own, his wife's, and Antony's testimony, exists in a phantasma, has some sick offense in his mind, and has lost his reason; in other words, is a "mad Brutus." There are

additional indications of his distraction and these have an even more immediate relationship to the stage conventions of madness in the revenge hero.

Brutus' sleeplessness, phantasmas, and visions are in conformity with the diagnosis of melancholy in Burton's famous work under "Symptoms, or Signs of Melancholy in the Body."

lean, withered, hollow-eyed, look old, wrinkled, harsh,. . .hard, dejected looks,. . .lightheaded, little or no sleep and that interrupt, terrible and fearful dreams. . .absurd and interrupt dreams, and many phantastical visions about their eyes,. . .²²

The symptoms are similar in a treatise by Timothy Bright on "Melancholie," which critics have assumed as not only having been read by Shakespeare, but also used as a possible source of parallel statements in *Hamlet*.²³ I feel the treatise is a possible source of similarly parallel references in *Julius Caesar*. Elsewhere Burton indicates that melancholy, weak-sighted, and sick men see visions (I, 424-425). Cassius states, "My sight was ever thick" (V. iii. 21).

Brutus. How ill this taper burns! Ha! who comes here?
I think it is the weakness of mine eyes
That shapes this monstrous apparition.

(IV. iii. 275-277)

Bright wrote in his *Treatise* (1586):

That melancholick humour. . .counterfitteth terrible objects to the fantasie, and polluting both the substance, and spirits of the brayne, causeth it without externall occasion to forge monstrous fictions, and terrible to the conceits.

(Wilson, p. 316)

The point is not that Bright is Shakespeare's source for Brutus' melancholy, for that is quite available in Cassius' lengthy analysis in Plutarch, but that the audience of Shakespeare's day, from its common knowledge of ailments, would be able to diagnose Brutus' malady as that of Hamlet. Brutus' madness in *Julius Caesar* was more explicitly available to Shakespeare's audience than it is to modern viewers.

A melancholic disposition, or condition, was conveyed by means of conventional stage business in which a book or a study was employed. The most familiar use of the convention occurs when Hamlet enters reading (II. ii. 169), an action which has its prototype in *The Spanish Tragedy*: "Enter Hieronimo with a book in his hand" (III. xiii). Antonio, in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, ". . . appears. . . carrying a book as do Hieronimo and Hamlet, . . ." ²⁴ Titus' madness and revenge are associated with excessive contemplation:

Tamora. Knock at his study, where they say, he keeps,
 To ruminate strange plots of dire revenge; . . .
Titus. Who doth molest my contemplation?
 Is it your trick to make me open the door,
 That so my sad decrees may fly away,
 And all my study be to no effect?

(V. ii. 5-6, 9-12)

Throughout his "Life of Marcus Brutus," Plutarch indicates that Brutus was "given to his book" (p. 104). Caesar complains of this trait as a symptom of danger in Cassius:

I do not know the man I should avoid
 So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much.

(I. ii. 200-201)

In Act II, Brutus has wandered from his wholesome bed and is in the orchard on the way to his study:

Get me a taper in my study, Lucius.
 When it is lighted, come and call me here.

(II. i. 7-8)

Brutus' preoccupation with books and study comes at peculiar times—on two occasions before the crucial battle.

Brutus, being in Pompey's camp, did nothing but study all day long, except he were with Pompey, and not only the days before, but the self same day also before the great battle was fought in the fields of Pharsalia, where Pompey was overthrown. . . . Furthermore, when others slept, or thought what would happen the morrow after, he fell to his book. . .

(Plutarch, p. 105)

In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus falls to his book with similar vehemence before the battle of Philippi:

Look, Lucius, here's the book I sought for so;
 I put it in the pocket of my gown.

(IV. iii. 252-253)

It is in an act symptomatic of a melancholic disposition that his evil spirit, or "ill angel,"²⁵ appears to Brutus.

Brutus. Let me see, let me see. Is not the leaf turned down
 Where I left reading? Here it is, I think.
 . . . Ha! who comes here?
Ghost. Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

(IV. iii. 273-275, 282)

Burton lists "overmuch Study" as one of the "Causes of Melancholy." A number of his authorities ". . .speak of a peculiar fury which comes by overmuch study. Fernelius. . .puts steady, contemplation, and continual meditation as an especial cause of madness. . . ." (p. 300). The prop of the book or the setting of a study is stage evidence, for the Elizabethan audience, of the revenge hero's madness or melancholia.

Stage madness is often represented by a disorder in the clothes of the character who is mentally deranged. The moment of madness for King Lear is accompanied by his discarding his clothes: "Off, off, you lendings! come, unbutton here. [*Tearing off his clothes*]" (III. iv. 112-113). Dover Wilson comments at length, in *What Happens in Hamlet* (pp. 96-98), on Hamlet's "antic disposition" as expressed in his costume. He and J.Q. Adams indicate that this "carelessness in dress" is "a madness in clothes."²⁶ It is up to directors to what extent Hamlet appears on-stage as he did off-stage in Ophelia's description (II. i. 77-83). No matter how disordered Hamlet's clothes are on stage, at least one element of Ophelia's description is usually followed: ". . .with his doublet all unbraced. . . ."²⁷

In the costuming of *Julius Caesar*, the expectation of togas has to be set aside and the condition of Brutus' anachronistic garb must be noted in connection with this tradition of employing disordered clothes as indications of an unbalanced mind. Instead of embracing the means to come by his health, Portia asks of Brutus,

. . .is it physical
To walk unbraced and suck up the humors
Of the dank morning?

(II. i. 261-263)

Hamlet and Brutus, in their respective plays, both appear "unbraced" to their lovers as they ruminate over the proposed murder of the head of state. Both women complain not only of the outward, but more significantly, of the internal transformation which the external only symbolizes:

Ophelia: Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
(III. i. 158)

Portia: No, my Brutus.
You have some sick offense within your mind.
(II. i. 267-268)

Cassius, as Brutus' legal brother and brother in deed, appears on stage in similar disarray. He has been wandering and exposing himself to the disorders of nature as if they were his element. Cassius vaunts before the dull Casca,

For my part, I have walked about the streets,
 Submitting me unto the perilous night,
 And, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,
 Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone;
 And when the cross blue lightning seemed to open
 The breast of heaven, I did present myself
 Even in the aim and very flash of it.

(I. iii. 46-52)

Shakespeare has Brutus and Cassius partake in one of the conventional representations of stage madness. Their disturbance is more subtle than Titus and Hieronimo's ravings and is akin to Hamlet's less extravagant or sustained wildness; hence Titus and Hieronimo may have been played with a disorder in clothes, but this would hardly need to be verbalized by other actors, or the characters themselves, to indicate their theatrical insanity.

By daring the elements, Cassius also indicates his conventional relationship to the hero who has embarked upon revenge and hence must indicate a willingness to die, a disposition to abide by fate, or a desire for suicide, since the death of the scourge is the traditional end of revenge structures. If Caesar wears a crown, says Cassius, "I know where I will wear this dagger then" (I. iii. 89), and it is not in Caesar, but himself.

Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius.
 Therein,²⁸ ye gods, you make the weak most strong;
 Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.
 No stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,
 Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,
 Can be retentive to the strength of spirit;
 But life, being weary of these worldly bars,
 Never lacks power to dismiss itself.

(I. iii. 90-97)

Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy (III. i. 56-88) is not only the best known speech; it is also one of two in the play within this convention: the other is "O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt" (I. ii. 129-159). The tradition has its origin in Hieronimo's deliberation. Hieronimo enters ". . . *with a poniard in one hand, and a rope in the other.*"

This way, or that way? Soft and fair, not so:
 For if I hang or kill myself, let's know
 Who will revenge Horatio's murder then?
 No, no! fie, no! pardon me, I'll none of that.
He flings away the dagger and halter.

(III. xii. 16-19)

In addition to expressing suicidal tendencies which are a natural adjunct to their revenge roles, the heroes indicate a distaste for the world and an ultimate fatalism. Both Hamlet (I. ii. 133 ff; II. ii. 291 ff.) and Cassius (I. i. 108

ff.) refer to the world as a prison and its content as so much offal (cf. Dover Wilson, p. 318; Burton, I, 13, 431-432). As he unknowingly is about to complete his revenge, Hamlet feels "There's a divinity that shapes our ends. . ." (V. ii. 10), and ". . . a special providence in the fall of a sparrow."

If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come,
it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. . .
(V. ii. 230-233)

Immediately after murdering Caesar, Brutus says,

Fates, we will know your pleasures.
That we shall die, we know; 'tis but the time,
And drawing days out, that men stand upon.
(III. i. 98-100)

Macbeth's "To-morrow and to-morrow" speech (V. iii. 19 ff), is analogous to this tradition. Before the final battle, Cassius tells Messala that although he ". . . held Epicurus strong. . ." he finds himself succumbing to a sense of fatalism (V. i. 76-91). Following Cassius' personal statement, Brutus, in a particularly characteristic passage, pulls the wool over his own eyes and says he still blames Cato for having committed suicide but that he, Brutus, leaving it up to providence, will under no circumstances "go bound to Rome" because "He bears too great a mind" (V. i. 97-112). This is as direct a suicide speech as one can expect to get from Brutus' self-analysis. Cassius and Brutus find their ends in suicide, and Brutus finally acknowledges fate (V. v. 41-42). In *Caesar's Revenge*, Brutus engages in the conventional pattern and contemplates suicide in the middle of the action:

O that I might in *Letbes* endless sleepe,
And meere awaking pleasant rest of death
Close up mine eyes, that I no more might see,
Poore *Romes* distresse and Countries misery.
(III. iii. sig. F recto)

In connection with madness and contemplation of suicide in the revenge heroes, let us note one other traditional pattern which is shared by *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*. The wives of lovers of all the revenge heroes become mad as the result of their loved one's revenge mania and in their madness take their own lives. Hieronimo's wife, Isabella, runs lunatic (III. viii.), and stabs herself (IV. ii. 37). Hamlet's love, Ophelia, twice enters distracted (IV. v. 21 and 154) and then drowns herself off stage, as reported by Gertrude (IV. viii. 165-186). Brutus reports with extreme brevity the loss of his wife by suicide after her distraction:

...she fell distract,
And (her attendants absent) swallowed fire.

(IV. iii. 155-156)

The above-mentioned conventional element reappears in the last half of *Macbeth* in Lady Macbeth's sleep walking scene (V. i.), and in her having "... by self and violent hands / Took off her life—" (V. viii. 70-71). Although Lady Macbeth is not the wife or lover of the revenge hero (as are Isabella, Portia, and Ophelia), madness and suicide occur at the same point in the revenge structure in *Macbeth* as do the other females' in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Hamlet*, the point being just before the protagonist either commits suicide or is slain in combat. Hence, the distraction and suicide of the female companions of revenge heroes appear as a pattern characteristic of the revenge plays under discussion here.

To summarize then: a number of stage conventions and a close analysis of the symptoms and diagnosis of Brutus' malady in *Julius Caesar* suggest that "the mad Brutus" does fall into the category of the conventional Elizabethan revenge hero. Under the strain of Cassius' proposals (which are, unknown to Brutus, structurally related to Pompey's revenge),²⁹ Brutus becomes distract and subject to melancholy and sleeplessness. Brutus' madness serves to prevent his seeing the speciousness of his arguments and the invalidity of his role. He attempts to settle his mental disturbance by feigning rational motivation to himself and idealistic goals to the conspirators as he proceeds to vanquish the tyrant. Thus, as Shakespeare was fully aware, Brutus fulfills the various aspects of the atavistic role thrust upon him by the conspiracy—that of his ancestor Junius Brutus who drove out a king, revenged an outrage, initiated Republicanism in Rome, played himself a role, and feigned insanity to cover up his calculating wit.

Hieronimo plays no role in connection with his madness. Titus and Hamlet express their intent to use their madness as a device. Brutus subconsciously uses his madness as a disguise, the mask which he mistakenly takes for reality.

It is actually Brutus' self that he most successfully deceives. If one of the stage reasons for feigning is to put the opposition (the counter-revenger) off guard, then Brutus' role playing has done just that. Part of Brutus' insanity is in having deceived *himself*—the very person who turns out to be the one who revenges Caesar's death upon Brutus! "For Brutus only [alone] overcame himself."

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NOTES

¹George L. Kittredge (ed.), *Antony and Cleopatra* (Boston, 1941), p. 178.

²II. i. 235-240. S.F. Johnson's note to I. 240 reads: "across folded across your chest (a sign of melancholy)," p. 59.

³*Shakespeare's Plutarch*, ed. T.J.B. Spencer (Baltimore, 1964), p. 109; see also p. 85. Under Causes of Melancholy, Burton lists Envy and says "It crucifies their soul, withers their bodies, makes them hollow-eyed, pale, lean and ghastly to behold. . . ." Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York, 1961), I, 264. Plutarch and Shakespeare variously describe Cassius as lean, pale, spare, and wrinkled. Portia complains of Brutus' weak condition in the play.

⁴See Burton, "Subsect. V—Bad Air a Cause of Melancholy," pp. 237-241.

To such as are melancholy, therefore, Montanus, *consil.* 24, will have tempestuous and rough air to be avoide, and *consil.* 27, all night air, and would not have them to walk abroad but in a pleasant day.

(p. 241)

"The ayre meet for melancholicke folke, ought to be thinne, pure and subtile, open and patent to all winds: in respect of their temper, especially to the South, and Southeast." Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (1586) p. 247, as quoted in Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet* (Cambridge, 1935), appendix E, p. 311. See also the disease Brutus contracted, Plutarch, "The Life of Marcus Brutus," pp. 134-135. Burton also suggests that a cure for melancholy is "to impart our misery to some friend," (II, 107), which is precisely the burden of Portia's plea (II. i. 255 ff, 269 ff, and 291 ff.).

⁵II. ii. 262. See Wilson, Appendix E, p. 316.

⁶See Kittredge, ed., *Julius Caesar* (Boston, 1939), p. xviii. Bernard Breyer, "A New Look at *Julius Caesar*," *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry*, ed. Richmond C. Beatty et al. (Nashville, Tenn., 1954), reprinted in *Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*, ed. Julian Markels (New York, 1961), p. 46.

⁷Samuel Taylor Coleridge's manuscript notes, *Coleridge's Writings on Shakespeare*, ed. Terence Hawkes (New York, 1959), pp. 244-245.

⁸In Plutarch, Brutus did what he did because his friends, noblemen, and countrymen required ". . . as a due debt unto them, the taking away of the tyranny. . . ." ("The Life of Marcus Brutus," ed. T.J.B. Spencer, p. 113). As opposed to Shakespeare's presentation, Caesar's tyranny in Plutarch exists in the present tense and the petitions are genuine, not contrived by Cassius. It appears Shakespeare has removed all real motivation save what Brutus discloses to us about himself by implication in his soliloquy.

⁹Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (Princeton, 1947), II, 354. For a list of divergent critical analyses with regard to Brutus in particular and the apparent resulting ambiguity of the play as a whole, see Mildred E. Hartsock, "The Complexity of *Julius Caesar*," *PMLA*, 81 (March, 1966), 56-62.

¹⁰Geoffrey Bullough, *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London, 1964), V, 55.

¹¹Ernest Schanzer, "Preface to *Julius Caesar*," *Oeuvres complètes de Shakespeare* (Paris, 1957), IV, 245-260, reprinted in Markels, p. 96; and Brents Stirling, *Unity in Shakespearean Tragedy* (New York, 1956), p. 40, reprinted as "Or Else Were This a Savage Spectacle": Ritual in *Julius Caesar*," in *Shakespeare: The Tragedies*, ed. Alfred Harbage (Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1964), p. 34.

¹²H.B. Charlton, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (Cambridge, England, 1961), p. 76.

¹³Gordon Ross Smith, "Brutus, Virtue, and Will," *SQ*, 10 (Summer, 1959), reprinted in Markels, p. 107.

¹⁴Robert Littman, *Review Notes and Study Guide to Shakespeare's Julius Caesar* (New York, 1964), p. 27.

¹⁵G.B. Harrison, *Julius Caesar in Shakespeare, Shaw and the Ancients* (New York, 1960), II. i. 30n, p. 10.

¹⁶E.F.C. Ludowyk, *Understanding Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 185.

¹⁷See S.F. Johnson, "Introduction," *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar* (Baltimore, 1963), p. 18.

¹⁸There are several readings of this line (II. i. 15), and in this case Hardin Craig's (*The Complete Works* (Chicago, 1951), p. 778) is preferred; G.B. Harrison (*Julius Caesar in Shakespeare*, . . . p. 10) concurs. Julian Markels provides a satisfactory paraphrase of a similar choice of punctuation: "Crown him?—that!, give him the crown? do that!" (*Shakespeare's Julius Caesar*, p. 14). Kittredge (ed., *Complete Works* (Boston, 1936), p. 1088) has: "Crown him—that!" S.F. Johnson, otherwise my text, reduces the punctuation and provides an explanatory footnote: "Crown him that i.e. king (a word Brutus here avoids)" (p. 49), which seems to me an unnecessary complication.

¹⁹. . . the great honors and favour Caesar showed unto him [Brutus] kept him back, that of himself alone he did not conspire nor consent to depose him of his kingdom. For Caesar did not only save his life after the battle of Pharsalia when Pompey fled, and did at his request also save many more of his friends besides. But, furthermore, he put a marvellous confidence in him. For he had already preferred him to the Praetorship for that year, and furthermore was appointed to be Consul, the fourth year after that, having through Caesar's friendship obtained it before Cassius, who likewise made suit for the same. And Caesar also, as it is reported, said in this contention: 'Indeed Cassius hath alleged best reason, but yet shall he not be chosen before Brutus.' (Plutarch, ed. T.J.B. Spencer, p. 84).

²⁰Brutus was made *praetor urbanus*; Cassius, *praetor peregrinus*; Cinna was a praetor; and Caesar had appointed Decius Brutus "to be his next heir. . . in his last will and testament" pp. 89-90.

²¹Brutus has a habit of mind in which he attributes faults or behavior to others which he will not acknowledge in himself. He says Antony is not to be worried about because, "If he love Caesar, all that he can do / Is to himself take thought ("fall into a melancholy state"—S.F. Johnson) and die for Caesar," (II. i. 186-87) Brutus loves Caesar well, is subject to melancholy and overmuch thinking, and will commit suicide in revenge of Caesar's death.

²²Mainly quoting "Hippocrates in his book *de insania et melan.*" Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York, 1961), I, 383.

²³Appendix E: "Shakespeare's Knowledge of *A Treatise of Melancholia* by Timothy Bright," Dover Wilson, pp. 309-320. Pp. 309-310 discuss the probability of Shakespeare's knowledge; p. 316 contains the symptoms similar to Burton's.

²⁴Bowers, pp. 118-119, no. 8.

²⁵"I am thy ill angel, Brutus, and thou shalt see me by the city of Philippei." Plutarch, ed. T.J.B. Spencer, p. 100.

²⁶*Hamlet*, ed. J.Q. Adams (Boston, 1929), pp. 222-224, as quoted in Dover Wilson, pp. 96-97.

²⁷L. 78. In Sir Lawrence Olivier's film production he played a Hamlet with a black doublet unlaced at the throat.

²⁸*Therein* i.e. in suicide" S.F. Johnson, p. 46.

²⁹Cf. W. Nicholas Knight, "Julius Caesar and Shakespearean Revenge Tragedy," *The Erasmus Review*, September, 1971, pp. 19-34.

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST AND THE MARX BROTHERS

by Robert C. Fulton, III

Love's Labour's Lost combines a great deal of verbal wit with visual humor, a staple mixture in the dramatizing of the ludicrous from the time of the Greek comic playwright Aristophanes. In Shakespeare's play this mixture has the effect of reducing attempts at smooth behavior and refined speech to absurd posturing and fluffy rhetoric. Dignity and fanciness are taken for a ride. If one were to search for popular modern analogues, as I once did when teaching the play in an undergraduate Shakespeare course, the films of the Marx Brothers offer an abundance of material.

At first glance the connection may seem tenuous. The differences between a Marx Brothers movie and the *Love's Labour's Lost* which most of us encounter (the play in the classroom, on the printed page) are obvious. Groucho, Chico, and Harpo make us laugh more readily than characters in Shakespeare's play. We can respond more immediately to their broadness and outrageousness—qualities inherent as much in the visual as in the verbal aspects of their films—than to the wittiness and intricacy of *Love's Labour's Lost*. This is in large part so because it is hard to picture how the jokes and puns in the play are delivered and received. Unless we have seen it produced, the play does not live in our visual memories. In the classroom we can study and understand and perhaps laugh at the verbal wit, but it is hard to imagine what would be occurring on stage during a scene of repartee or dialogue with excesses like those of Act IV, Scene ii, in which Dull's illiteracy is shown to be proof against Holofernes' affectedly pedantic speech:

Enter Dull, Holofernes the Pedant, and Nathaniel [discussing the deer hunt of the Princess].

Nathaniel. Very reverend sport, truly, and done in the testimony of a good conscience.

Holofernes. The deer was, as you know, sanguis, in blood; ripe as pomewater, who now hangeth like a jewel in the ear of coelo, the sky, the welkin, the heaven; and anon falleth like a crab on the face of terra, the soil, the land, the earth.

Nathaniel. Truly, Master Holofernes, the epithets are sweetly varied, like a scholar at the least; but sir, I assure ye it was a buck of the first head.

Holofernes. Sir Nathaniel, haud credo.

Dull. 'Twas not a haud credo; 'twas a pricket.

Holofernes. Most barbarous intimation! Yet a kind of insinuation, as it were, in via, in way, of explication; facere, as it were, replication, or rather, ostentare, to show, as it were, his inclination—after his undressed, unpolished, uneducated,

unpruned, untrained, or, rather, unlettered, or, ratherest, unconfirmed fashion—to insert again my haud credo for a deer.
Dull. I said the deer was not a haud credo—'twas a pricket.¹

The joke is that Dull has mistaken the Pedant's correcting of Nathaniel ("haud credo"—I don't think so at all) for an "old grey doe" and is trying to set Holofernes straight about the kind of deer the Princess has killed (a buck in its second year—"pricket"). If we have missed the bilingual pun, then a footnote is necessary to get the point. But the play will not achieve any comic reality until we can move beyond the gloss to the fact of the characters speaking with each other. How does the bit play? What is Dull doing as he listens to Holofernes? Although practical answers to the questions are decided by actors and directors, and will vary from one production to the next, they are a necessary concern for the reader who is not likely to encounter the play in the theater. Trying to answer them helps to keep *Love's Labour's Lost* from becoming exclusively a text for literary study. Trying to answer them also helps to restore the play to the popular status it enjoyed in Shakespeare's age.²

With some imaginative adjusting of our responses it is possible to view the scene of Shakespeare while reading it. And here I return to the Marx Brothers, who can give us a lead. Take, for instance, the "viaduct"/"why-a duck" scene in *The Cocoanuts*, a case of misunderstanding which parallels that of Dull's already quoted. Groucho is trying to give directions to Chico by referring to a map of land parcels:

"Here's Cocoanut Grove," he says, "and here's Cocoanut Heights—it's a swamp—and here, where the road forks, is Cocoanut Junction." "Where," asks Chico, "is Cocoanut Custard?" "Over by the forks." Groucho makes the grievous error of pointing out a viaduct. Chico seizes on it immediately: "Why-a duck, why-a no chicken?" The more Groucho tries to explain it, the more tenacious Chico becomes. After fifteen explanations, Chico is still fixated. "All right," he says, "I catch on why-a horse, why-a chicken, why this, why that: I no catch on why-a duck." Groucho surrenders. "I was only fooling," he says. "I was only fooling. They're going to build a tunnel there in the morning. Now is that clear to you?" "Yes," Chico returns, "everything except why-a duck."³

Chico's dogged, repetitious stupidity is complemented by the exasperation his face expresses once the verbal impasse has been established. Surely Dull, an equally obtuse interlocutor, must register something of the same exasperation as he tries to explain to Nathaniel and Holofernes about the deer the Princess has killed. Holofernes' Latinism has produced about the same effect on Dull as Groucho's on Chico. Although Shakespeare's pun is far-fetched, it gains in humor when we picture its visual accompaniment, the grimace of the misunderstander who thinks he is being misunderstood. Once

the process of picturing such comic bits is set in motion, we are in a position to analyze the impact of the play as a work of the theater.

A large part of the dramatic impulse in *Love's Labour's Lost* is, I think, the same as that in the Marx Brothers, the determined undercutting of pomposity and the mocking of styles out of touch with the actual. It is the fact of this impulse which gives point to a comparison of their comic procedures. Consider the encounter of Armado and Jaquenetta in Act I, Scene ii, of Shakespeare's play:

Armado. I do betray myself with blushing. Maid!
Jaquenetta. Man?
Armado. I will visit thee at the lodge.
Jaquenetta. That's hereby.
Armado. I know where it is situate.
Jaquenetta. Lord, how wise you are!
Armado. I will tell thee wonders.
Jaquenetta. With that face?

(11. 123-130)

Of this dialogue Alfred Harbage has observed that it supplies "a thumb-nail anthology of rustic comebacks of old, on the level of the modern 'sez you' " (intro. *Love's Labour's Lost*, p. 175). The pompous lover Armado is forced to play the straight man to Jaquenetta's Groucho, and the discomfiture which her wisecracks cause must register in some nervous tic or involuntary gesture, much as Margaret Dumont raises her eyes in dismay when Groucho, her beloved, assaults her amplitude with a risqué compliment (as he does, for example, as J. Wolf Flywheel in *The Big Store*). The source of the comedy in each case is the disparity between what the straight person tries and wants to be and what he is made to be by the comic.

Styles frozen into jargon are ridiculed in both Shakespeare's play and the Marx Brothers. Holofernes' "haud credo" speech is a prime example. So, too, is Armado's disquisition on poetical terminology which gets mocked in Act III, Scene i, when he, his page Moth, and the country clown Costard become entangled in a dialogue which turns on levels of misunderstanding. It begins when Moth announces: "A wonder, master! Here's a costard [i.e., cooking apple] broken in a shin." With a supercilious air Armado stoops to play: "Some enigma, some riddle. Come, thy l'envoy—begin." This is beyond Costard, whose subsequent confusing of terminology amuses Armado. But Moth, the *word* incarnate via a French pun (Moth/*mot*), turns his master's laughter and condescending explanations against him, demonstrating how Costard's error over the literary term "l'envoy" (the clown thinks it is a kind of salve) is really truth. And once Costard hears the little rhyme with its envoy—

The fox, the ape, and humble bee
 Were still at odds, being but three,
 Until the goose came out of door,
 Staying the odds by adding four—

he understands: "Let me see—a fat l'envoy—ay, that's a fat goose." By now Armado is the confused party: "How did this argument begin?"

Moth. By saying that a costard was broken in a shin. Then you called for the l'envoy.

Costard. True, and I for a plantain; thus came your argument in; Then the boy's fat l'envoy, the goose that you bought; And he ended the market.

Armado. But tell me, how was there a costard broken in a shin?

Moth. I will tell you sensibly.

Costard. Thou has no feeling of it, Moth. I will speak that l'envoy: I, Costard, running out, that was safely within, Fell over the threshold and broke my shin.

Armado. We will talk no more of this matter.

Costard. Till there be more matter in the shin.

Armado. Sirrah Costard, I will enfranchise thee.

Costard. O, marry me to one Frances! I smell some l'envoy, some goose in this.

The comic focus is now beginning to drift towards other varieties of fancy talk ("enfranchise"/"Frances"). Armado sets Costard free to deliver a love letter to Jaquenetta. The "remuneration" which Costard receives for the service—"three farthings" by another name—and the "guerdon" which the courtier Berowne gives him for the same task (a shilling from the lord) are mocked for the gentlemanly preciousness by which they are called: "Gardon, O sweet gardon! Better than remuneration—a 'leven-pence farthing better. Most sweet gardon! I will do it, sir, in print. Gardon—remuneration." (This whole business covers 11. 63-161.)

In much the same way that these habits of speech attract ridicule in *Love's Labour's Lost*, various kinds of officious language seem to call for deflation in Marx Brothers films. For example, in *Duck Soup* Chico has to stand trial for the attempted theft of Fredonia's war plans. Aided by Groucho, he manages to subvert the Fredonian prosecutor's examination by turning the proceedings into a game of questions and answers:

Groucho: Chiccolini, give me a number one to ten.

Chico: Eleven.

Groucho: Right.

Chico: Now I ask you one. What is it has a trunk, but no key, weighs 2,000 pounds, and lives in the circus?

Prosecutor: That's irrelevant.

Chico: A relyphant. Hey, that's the answer! There's a whole lotter elephants in the circus.

Minister: That sort of testimony we can eliminate.

Chico: Atsa fine. I'll take some.

Minister: You'll take *what*?

Chico: Eliminate. A nice cool glass eliminate.

(Adamson, p. 242)

The routine is characteristic of Groucho and Chico. (It is also reminiscent of *Love's Labour's Lost*, I. i. 178-298, where the King of Navarre receives Armado's letter of accusation against Costard, questions the clown, and sentences him. Chico's concluding double pun in the dialogue just quoted, with its one straight and one off-color reference, is worthy to stand beside several of the puns in Shakespeare's scene.) The language of the law takes another riding in a scene from *A Night at the Opera*. Legalese is comically torn to shreds when Groucho tries to explain a contract to Chico. They each hold a floor-length copy of the document as Groucho begins to read aloud. But Chico does not like what he hears, so Groucho starts again:

Groucho: "The party of the first part shall be known in this contract as the party of the first part."

Chico: Well, it sounds a little better this time.

Groucho: Well, it grows on you. Would you like to hear it once more?

Chico: Just the first part.

Groucho: What do you mean, the . . .the party of the first part?

Chico: No, the first part of the party of the first part.

Groucho: All right, it says the, uh, "The first part of the party of the first part shall be known in this contract as the first part of the party of the first part shall be known in this contract. . . ." Look, why should we quarrel about a thing like this, we'll take it right out, eh? [Here Groucho tears a strip from the top of his copy.]

Chico: Yeah, ha, it's-a too long anyhow! [Here Chico does the same.] Now, what do we got left?

Groucho: Well, I got about a foot and a half. Now it says, uh, "The party of the second part shall be known in this contract as the party of the second part."

Chico: Well, I don't know about that. . .

Groucho: Now what's the matter?

Chico: I no like-a the second party either.

Groucho: Well, you shoulda come to the first party, we didn't get home till around four in the morning. I was blind for three days.

The whole thing strikes Chico as wrong. He even suggests revision: "Hey, look, why can't-a the first part of the second party be the second part of the first party? Then you *got* something." Finally, after all the other clauses have been ripped out, there remains only the "sanity clause," which Chico also objects to: "You can't fool me, mister, there ain't no Sanity Clause!" (Adamson, pp. 286-288). This absurdly funny scene has a target no less recognizable than those I have already indicated in *Love's Labour's Lost*, a style which no longer seems to regard the actual disposition of things.

In the contract scene Groucho and Chico keep a healthy distance from the language they are dealing with. Clearly this legal jargon is just a bunch of words on a page, and Groucho and Chico remain suitably unawed, reducing the document by tearing it bit by bit. But when a character in a Marx Brothers movie becomes identified with a frozen style, he is mocked along with his language: the man and his words have merged, so that we cannot laugh at the one without laughing at the other. Take, for example, Alky Briggs, the tough-talking bootlegger in *Monkey Business*, who has just found Groucho engaged in a passionate and private dance with Mrs. Briggs. Out comes the gun. But Groucho will not take this conventional response seriously, instead chiding the gangster for interrupting. Alky comes back with a predictable threat—"I'm going to lay you out pretty"—but Groucho still refuses to be the terror-stricken victim, countering, instead, with "That's the thanks I get for freeing an innocent girl who, though she is hiding in the closet at the moment, has promised to become the mother of her children." As the dialogue proceeds, Alky becomes increasingly risible in his part:

Alky: I'm wise! I'm wise!

Groucho: You're wise, eh? Well, what's the capital of Nebraska? What's the capital of the Chase Manhattan Bank? Give up?

Alky: You. . .

Groucho: Now, I'll try an easy one. How many Frenchmen can't be wrong?

Alky: I know. . .

Groucho: You were warm, and so was she. But don't be discouraged. With a little study you'll go a long way, and I wish you'd start now.

Alky: Do you see this gat?

Groucho: Cute, isn't it? Santy Claus bring if for Christmas? I got a fire engine.

Alky: Listen, mug. . .do you know who I am?

Groucho: Now, don't tell me. Are you animal or vegetable?

Alky: Grrr!

Groucho: Animal.

Alky: Get this. . .I'm Alky Briggs!

Groucho: And I? I'm the fellow who talks too much. Fancy meeting you here after all these drinks!

Alky: Wait a minute!

(Zimmerman and Goldblatt, pp. 48-49, Adamson, pp. 147-149)

Joe Adamson says of this scene: "By the rules of the cinema, the victim has to deliver the proper lines first. He can't be shot until he's said, 'Don't shoot! Don't shoot!' or 'Lay off, Alky, it's not what you think!' So there stands Alky, delivering cliché after cliché, waiting for his cue, and off goes Groucho on a whirlwind of nonsense, leaving him stunned" (p. 149).

Characters in Shakespeare's play are also made to appear foolishly inept when they encounter an audience unwilling to accept the clichés into which

their language and actions have hardened. Take the case of Navarre and his men. Once having decided to forsake their academy for pursuit of the Princess of France and her ladies, the courtiers start behaving like cut-out lovers. They turn sonneteers and, like Petrarch, make love at a distance, although with some doubts about the effectiveness of such a procedure. Longaville, for instance, wonders about his poetic expression of feeling:

I fear these stubborn lines lack power to move.
O sweet Maria, empress of my love!
These numbers will I tear and write in prose.

(IV. iii. 50-52)

Then he decides to send his sonnet anyway, reciting it with pleasure. Dumaine reads his effusion of love and, on reflection, adds: "This will I send, and something else more plain" (IV. iii. 96-116). By the end of this scene they are beginning to feel the need to court face-to-face and agree to staging an entertainment, "For," as Berowne observes, "revels, dances, masks, and merry hours / Forerun fair Love, strewing her way with flowers" (IV. iii. 374-375). But the men's eager taking on of stereotyped roles and their total submersion in romantic cliché have blinded them to the possibility that the ladies may not be very interested. And indeed, this is what we see in Act V, Scene ii, when their *pièce de résistance*, a masque with prologue, Blackamoors for musicians, and fancy costume (Muscovite, no less), is mocked off the stage because the Princess and her ladies refuse to be cut-out mistresses. The women and their court companion Boyet play Groucho to the lords' Alky Briggs, or, to readjust the second term, to the lords' Margaret Dumont. For Margaret Dumont's problem, whenever she and Groucho are engaged in courtship, is the very great difficulty of maintaining dignity in the face of Groucho's japery and clowning. He is able to make her seem foolish in large part because he makes himself foolish. Her attempts at propriety in love are comically inappropriate when juxtaposed with Groucho's baggy-pants routine. And such is the clash in Act V, Scene ii, of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The Princess and her ladies are supposed to be appreciatively responsive to the lords' masque. At least the men expect that their prologue—a nice piece of compliment which will make clear what the Muscovian strangers are doing so far from home—will get a hearing. It is well to quote, without interruption, its first five lines and to suggest what might have followed had the presenter (Moth) not been mocked out of memory:

All hail, the fairest beauties on the earth!
A holy parcel of the fairest dames,
That ever turned their eyes to mortal views!
Out of your favors, heavenly spirits, vouchsafe
Once to behold with your sun-beamed eyes. . .

(V. ii. 158-169)

Here presumably would occur the request to look on these strangers who have come all the way from Russia in search of the beauties whose fame has spread even to the farthest reaches of the frozen steppes, to warm these pilgrims with a glance from their brilliant eyes. Given the manifestly literary turn of Navarre's court, there is not a great deal that could be rejected as unlikely once the requisite Petrarchan conventions are set out to mark the limits of aptitude. The prologue, not to mention the show it tries to introduce, is stylish for the sake of being stylish, a clear Elizabethan case of "putting on the dog," and therefore fair game for ridicule in this play.

The method of ridicule, as I have suggested, is much in the manner of Groucho. First the Princess and her ladies turn their backs on Moth and the Muscovites. But Moth's prepared speech has nothing in it about their backs. Nor has the little page been told to expect the wisecracks which his words occasion. In true Groucho style Boyet undermines the romantically hyperbolic assertions of the prologue (ll. 159, 165, 171-172), and Moth gets the dries. Having scolded him away, the lords find they must themselves deal with this uncooperative group of women. How awkward for them: the *raison d'être* for their costume was to have provided a smooth entree for the men, but now, having lost the explanatory key to the entertainment, they must sweat irrelevantly in their Russian silks and fur hats. Nevertheless, there is still dancing to save the day. And here the women compound the foolishness of the men by continuing a policy of noncooperation. "Play, music, then. Nay, you must do it soon," commands Rosaline, and the unprepared lords try to get themselves together as their disconcerted Blackamoor musicians begin to play. Then, after a few stray bleats and whines, while Navarre and his men are arranging themselves, Rosaline abruptly breaks off: "Not yet—no dance! Thus change I like the moon" (ll. 212-213). The lords are all set, ready for their first graceful step, but their partners have left them in the absurd posture of saluting the empty air. Once more the ladies appear ready—"take hands"—but again Rosaline pulls back—"we will not dance" (l. 220). It is easy to imagine how funny the staging of this high-class slapstick should be.⁴ But to love by the book one must suffer and persevere, and so the men press on to the commoning. Now each hopes for some private and licensed love-speech with his mistress. Of course, we already know that any words they speak will be misdirected, since the ladies are visored and, in anticipation of the fun, have crossed their identities by exchanging with each other the gifts which the courtiers had sent ahead of their entertainment (see V. ii. 1-136). Therefore, each man will address the wrong woman. But beyond this, the commoning which the lords do get is hardly what they were looking forward to. No fair words here: puns, quips, and comebacks to prick, point, and puncture the wooing the men try to get started. As Boyet aptly observes of the ladies' chat, "their conceits have wings / Fleeter than arrows, bullets, wind,

thought, swifter things" (11. 261-262). There is nothing left but withdrawal:

Berowne By heaven, all dry-beaten with pure scoff!
King Farewell, mad wenches. You have simple wits.
 (11. 264-265)

Throughout this scene the ladies have refused to accredit their lovers' styles, largely by not allowing themselves to be made into the stereotypes which Navarre and his men require for the success of their wooing. The men had assumed that conventional actions would bring about conventional reactions, that is, that sonnet wooing and modish masquing would freeze four stars in a sable sky and then obligingly return them to earth. But, like numerous victims of the Marx Brothers, they are made to see that there is no standing still for a cliché. Because the lords have become entrapped by their styles, they are unable to cope with what is happening around them. All they can do, like Alky Briggs, is give up.

The rejection of Navarre's masque in this scene is characteristic of the play as a whole. *Love's Labour's Lost* is in comically hot pursuit of various excessive styles. In this the play is indicative of its time. During the last decade of the sixteenth century, Elizabethan audiences were beginning to show distaste for sugary sonnet sequences and to relish the bite of satire. They were growing weary of the highly patterned and balanced prose of John Lyly. Although *Love's Labour's Lost* manages to communicate its attitudes in some very well-turned-out language of its own, the play clearly reflects a scepticism towards fanciness, a scepticism conveyed by verbal and visual fooling of the sort discussed in this essay. And here, as I have suggested, is where it connects with the Marx Brothers. Like Shakespeare's play, their films exploit the comic resources of dialogue and action in order to make and mar silliness, providing antidotes to the overdone styles of the age. "Ridiculous throughout and apparently striking the right note at this period," said a reviewer of *Monkey Business* in 1931 (Adamson, p. 157). And how felicitous this is in describing *Love's Labour's Lost*! Or, as Dull exclaims with mounting exasperation, "And I say the pollution holds in the exchange" (IV. iii. 44).

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Notes

¹IV. ii. 1 S.D.-20 in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, general ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969); all quotations of Shakespeare are uniform with this edition. Harbage glosses the "haud credo/pricket" business thus: "Dull has mistaken the Latin *credo* for a reference to some kind of 'doe'" (p. 191*n*).

²The play abounds in contemporary allusions and jokes with special appeal for a literate audience in touch with recent developments in intellectual and literary fashion. Although the only records we have of its early performances link the play with court audiences, contemporary references to *Love's Labour's Lost* by persons outside court circles suggest that it appealed to more than kings and queens. See the editions of Richard David (London: Methuen, 1956), xxvi, and J.D. Wilson (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), lix-lx.

³Except for those who carry Marx Brothers movies intact in their heads, a text or at least the descriptions of scenes is an indispensable aid to memory. The quoted account of the "viaduct/why-a duck" routine is from Paul D. Zimmerman and Burt Goldblatt, *The Marx Brothers at the Movies* (New York: New American Library, 1968), pp. 22-23. None of the movies, to my knowledge, has been published as a screen play, the reasons for which are made apparent in Joe Adamson's description of the writing and producing of the films (see *Groucho, Harpo, Chico and Sometimes Zeppo* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973]). Dialogue from the movies is quoted from either Zimmerman and Goldblatt or Adamson.

⁴Apropos of an Old Vic Company production of the play directed by Hugh Hunt (winter 1949-50), Richard David says of the masque scene: "It is clear that the lords, though constantly tantalized into thinking that the ladies may dance with them, are as constantly put off." David finds fault with Hunt's "striving to impose an extra formality on an already formal play," citing among other things the formal dancing which occurred in the Old Vic production after Rosaline calls for music. This dancing "continued for some time before Rosaline, resuming her broken speech, brought the measure to an end. . . . Ten lines later, the King is still begging the 'princess' to begin" ("Shakespeare's Comedies and the Modern Stage," *Shakespeare Survey*, 4 [1951], 131).

FALSTAFF—A TRICKSTER FIGURE

by Edith Kern

Carl Jung defined the trickster figure as a "'psychologem', an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. . . , a faithful reflection of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that hardly left the animal level."¹ He did so in a commentary, made upon request, to a study of the North-American Trickster by the anthropologist, Paul Radin. Radin had discovered this figure "in clearly recognizable form among the simplest aboriginal tribes and among the complex (xxiii)." But he also recognized its analogues in the literatures of ancient Greece, China, Japan, and the Semitic world, adding that "many of the Trickster's traits are perpetuated in the figure of the medieval jester and have survived up to the present day in the Punch-and-Judy plays and in the clown (xxiii)." The American-Indian Trickster, forever shifting his countenance from animal to human, even male to female, appears in the tales retold by Radin as both stupid and clever, rebelliously immoral or simply amoral, primitive as well as shrewd. He plays outrageous tricks on all those he encounters and is outwitted as often as he boasts of outwitting others, until, at the end of his life, he becomes aware of the purpose for which he has been sent to Earth by Earthmaker and, in a wild triumph of the imagination, turns the world upside down: killing all those who have suppressed his people, indulging copiously in rich food, and ascending to heaven. (52) On reading Radin's account and his collection of Trickster tales, Jung also recalled similar figures belonging to the European Middle Ages as well as to Greek and Roman antiquity. He believed the Trickster to be an avatar not only of the Greek god Hermes known as the thief but also of the still more ancient god Mercurius, "a daemonic being resurrected from primitive times."² Such characters share with Trickster traits that make them semi-divine, semi-human, semi-animal. Like him, they are capable of assuming various shapes and disguises and perpetually indulge in play-acting in their fondness for sly jokes and malicious pranks. What intrigued the psychoanalyst above all was the figure's inherent ambivalence: its perpetual wavering between good and evil that made him resemble the Christian "devil," described by the Middle Ages as *simia dei*, the Ape of God, "the simpleton who cheats and is cheated in turn." The activities of the North-American Trickster evoked for Jung the mood of Carnival as it was known to the medieval Church with its reversal of hierarchic order—a mood still prevailing in carnivalesque celebrations of the student societies known to him. (One might add that this mood also still prevails during carnivalesque festivities in some European as well as South-American countries.)

During medieval celebrations such trickster figures—joyously rebellious and amoral to the point of transgressing all social and religious laws—established a momentary utopia, as they abased the mighty and elevated the meek, thereby annulling all established hierarchy in a sort of fantasy triumph. *Deposuit potentes de sede et exaltavit humiles* (He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree) was a refrain that echoed through cathedrals on such festive occasions, as, under the leadership of the trickster, the powerful clergy were removed from their high seats and their places taken by the humble and the poor.³ Such a comic act of justice was filled with ambivalence. While it travestied sacred language and texts, it seemed to derive its inspiration from the Scriptures. While it brought about a higher justice, it defied prevailing laws and authority. The laughter it elicited was, as a consequence, either condemned or found liberating and those responsible for it considered either saints or sinners.

However, such ambivalent trickster figures are clearly not restricted to mythology and popular celebrations. They have appeared over and over again and in various guise in animal epics such as *Reynard the Fox*, as *picaros* in such picaresque tales as those of Tyll Eulenspiegel, and we can even recognize them in the novels of such modern authors as Thomas Mann, Günter Grass, and John Kennedy Toole—to mention but a few. They are usually endowed with ravenous appetites for food and—sometimes—sex. Their genius for plotting and scheming seems inexhaustible, and it is displayed either for the sheer fun of it, for exclusively selfish purposes, or in the service of others, that is, in the very sense of the *deposuit potentes* and of comic justice. The universal and profound appeal of such justice—at least in the realm of the imagination—is illustrated, I believe, by the popularity of Robin Hood and the glorification of trickster-outlaws in such national anthems as Australia's "Waltzing Mathilda" and Holland's "Piet Hein"—the Dutch pirate who stole the Spanish silver fleet. In Thomas Mann's *The Holy Sinner*, the trickster is not only redeemed through art but also beatified within the fictional world the author has created.

Should Falstaff be considered as belonging to the brotherhood of such tricksters? In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, C.L. Barber paved the way for such inclusion when he observed that in creating the Falstaff comedy the playwright "fused two main saturnalian traditions, the clowning customary on the stage and the folly customary on holiday, and produced something unprecedented (194)." Barber likened Falstaff to a Lord of Misrule who—at first with Prince Hal's fullest consent and later in pitiable contrast to him—wanted all year to be "playing holidays." In Barber's view Falstaff seems to assume at the time of his ultimate disgrace the role of the scapegoat of saturnalian rituals, that of a Mardi Gras who, after having presided over a revel is turned on by his followers, "tried in some sort of court, convicted of

sins notorious in the village during the last year, and burned or buried in effigy to signify a new start (206).” In fact, Barber came to the conclusion that “by turning on Falstaff as a scapegoat, as the villagers turned on their Mardi Gras, the prince can free himself from the sins, the ‘bad luck’, of Richard’s reign and of his father’s reign, to become a king in whom chivalry and a sense of divine ordination are restored (207).” While Barber did not refer to Falstaff as a trickster, he nevertheless linked him to ritual festivities as well as to stage tradition, both natural arenas for that ancient figure. Barber failed to recognize in Falstaff, however, those very traits of ambiguity that we have seen to be essential to the ancient as well as the modern trickster.

Interestingly enough, these traits were observed by Roy Battenhouse in an indisputably brilliant essay “Falstaff as Parodist and Perhaps Holy Fool.”⁴ Battenhouse complained that those “critics who have seen in Falstaff a Lord of Misrule may be correct, except for their own inadequate understanding of the role’s implications (34-5).” Yet as Battenhouse deplores that the “implications hidden under Shakespeare’s biblical echoes have been sadly neglected by commentators” and as he uses his intimate familiarity with the Scriptures to highlight these echoes, he, inadvertently, also portrays Falstaff as the Holy Sinner, the trickster who, in the spirit of the *deposuit potentes* is the redeemer defiled and ultimately redeemed. In his detailed analysis of *I Henry IV*, Battenhouse speaks of Falstaff’s many good offices under comic guise (45) and, going beyond the moment of Prince Hal’s rejection of him, makes reference to Mistress Quickly’s report of Falstaff’s death in *Henry V* (II. 3) and her belief that Falstaff is surely not in hell but in Arthur’s (Battenhouse reads: “Abraham’s”) bosom. In the critic’s words,

It is Falstaff who has been practicing the true sense of Ephesians v: redeeming time through manifest “unfruteful workes of darknes.” . . . Prince Hal’s purpose has been but a counterfeit redeeming, reductively political, which Falstaff *redeems* in the sense of re-estimates, re-evaluates. (47)

Seen in this light, Falstaff, rather than merely serving as the scapegoat upon whose back are loaded the sins of Prince Hal, acquires instead the ambivalence of the American-Indian Trickster, redeeming and redeemed, martyred and ultimately ascending into the heavens. The subtle biblical allusions Battenhouse discovered and uncovered within the play fit with such ease the trickster pattern in all its ramifications that it would be wrong to ignore its theatrical and carnivalesque tradition that was known to Shakespeare as well. We should not see Falstaff exclusively, therefore, in the noble light that Battenhouse sheds upon him. The playwright fused in him, indeed, “customary stage clowning and saturnalian holiday folly,” as Barber maintained, and their traces are the more easily recognizable because their

fusion was not as unprecedented as that critic believed it to be. Since Shakespeare brilliantly manipulated and transcended tradition, our admiration for his originality can only be enhanced by our awareness of this.

A quick comparison of Falstaff with a comic figure of one of Molière's comedies, the servant Scapin of *Les Fourberies de Scapin* (roughly translatable as *Scapin the Trickster*) may throw some light on the trickster's theatrical tradition. Mere servant though he is, Scapin is truly the comedy's protagonist, its Lord of Misrule, an ambivalent trickster responsible for all its absurdly merry and carnivalesque happenings and activities. In his untiring and devoted attempts to help his young master to obtain from his father—as rich, stingy, and authoritarian as tradition decrees—permission to marry the girl he has already married and the money he needs to take care of her, Scapin lies, tricks, steals, disguises himself and others, invents and stages plots, and succeeds in outwitting the old man—only to learn that all would have been well (indeed better), had he done nothing. Alfred Harbage's remark about Falstaff (quoted by Battenhouse) needs only minor alterations to be applicable to Scapin:

Falstaff is the least effective wrongdoer that ever lived. He's a thief whose booty is taken from him, a liar who is never believed, a drunkard who is never befuddled, a bully who is not feared. (33)

What complicates Scapin's position is the fact that Molière's comedy has not one but two pairs of lovers and, consequently, two old fathers whose problems must be solved by our trickster so that—with some assistance from another servant—he plunges with incredible speed from adventure into new adventure until he is ultimately outwitted and scapegoated—and yet resurrected in some comic way. His inventiveness, his shrewdness, his struggles in the medieval spirit of the comic *deposuit potentes* against powerful and overbearing fathers are ultimately to no avail because, to the surprise of all, the fathers' wishes are shown to have coincided all along with their sons' seemingly illicit desires. But because all problems are finally solved by sheer lucky coincidence, Scapin the indefatigable and witty strategist and manipulator proves not only superfluous but even finds himself threatened by those very authorities that he had so "successfully" tricked. He is temporarily spared the wrath of father G. only because it is rumored that he has been killed by a falling brick and, though "revived" just in time for the wedding feast, he can attend it only on "his deathbed," incapable of partaking of food and drink and threatened to be killed unless he promises to die. Yet his wit cannot be vanquished, and he manages to mock the two fathers, even while asking for their "forgiveness" as he anticipates his "demise."

Not unlike Prince Hal's fat companion, Scapin prides himself above all on his wit:

Well to tell you the truth, there isn't much I can't manage when I'm put to it. There's no doubt about it. I've quite a gift for smart ideas and ingenious little dodges. Of course, those who can't appreciate them call 'em shady, but, boasting apart, there are not many fellows to equal yours truly when it comes down to scheming or something that needs a little manipulation. (66)¹

His bragging is obviously restricted to the civilian milieu wherein he dwells, and his fancy cannot roam on battlefields or indulge in the heroic fantasies of the traditional braggart soldier (so popular that a special mask existed for him in the *commedia dell'arte*) that Falstaff resembles.

Scoundrel that he is, Scapin has his differences with the law, as he delicately admits to his fellow servant, and blames it all on "the way things are being done nowadays" (67). Yet, his cheating being done on a smaller scale than that of Falstaff—who robs, and is robbed of his booty by Prince Hal himself—Scapin does not have to be bailed out by a future king. It is only within the world of his young masters—actually vis-a-vis their fathers—that he applies his skills of extorting, snatching up purses, inventing blackmailing brothers of injured young ladies and Turkish kidnappers, and making sport of those who take themselves too seriously. His labors are both strenuous and hilarious, as this sample of his getting money from father G. might indicate:

G. Four hundred guineas, you said?

Scapin. Five hundred.

G. Here Scapin. . . (Takes the purse from his pocket and offers it to

Scapin) Take it! Off you go and ransom my son!

Scapin. (Holding his hand out) Very good, sir.

G. (Keeping his purse, though making as if to give it to Scapin)

And tell that Turk he's a scoundrel!

Scapin. (Still holding his hand out) Right!

G. (Putting his purse back in his pocket and moving off) And now go get my son back!

Scapin. (Running after him). Heh, master! . . . Where's the money?

G. Didn't I give it to you? . . . Ah! It's the grief that makes me do that!

I don't know what I'm doing. (92-3)

Yet for all his loyalty to his young master, Scapin cheats him as readily as Falstaff betrays Prince Hal. Just as Falstaff may grumble behind the Prince's back that he is "a Jack, a sneak-up" whom he threatens to cudgel like a dog, so Scapin will engage in treachery, especially where food, drink, or valuables are concerned. Finding himself accused by young Leander of a misdeed as yet undefined, Scapin—whose conscience is never quite clear—confesses: "I and a few friends drank that small quartern cask of Spanish wine someone gave you a few days ago. It was I who made the hole in the cask and poured water on the floor to make you think the wine had run out (80)." And as soon as he realizes that this is not the misdeed for which he was meant to be reprehended, he

rashly confesses to another: "I confess that one evening about three weeks ago you sent me with a watch to the young . . . girl you are in love with and I came home with my clothes torn and my face covered with blood and I told you I'd been beaten and robbed. It was me, master—I'd kept the watch for myself (80)!"

But his consummate artistry as a trickster who also authors, directs, and acts in intricate plots is displayed above all in a scene in which he coaches the second young man, Octavio, to face up boldly to the return of his father, the very thought of whom makes the youth tremble. As he rehearses Octavio, it is, of course, Scapin who assumes the part of the father:

Scapin. Well, unless you stand firm from the outset he'll take advantage. . . to treat you like a child. Come, try to pull yourself together. Make up your mind to answer him firmly whatever he says to you.

O. I'll do what I can.

Scapin. We had better practice a little to get you used to the idea. We'll put you through your part and see how you get on. Come now, a resolute air, head up, firm glance.

O. Like this?

Scapin. A bit more yet.

O. That it?

Scapin. Right. Now imagine I am your father coming in. Answer me boldly as if I were he. 'Now, you scoundrelly good for nothing! You disgrace to a decent father! How dare you come near me after what you have done while I have been away? Is this what I get for all I've done for you, you dog! Is this the way you obey me? Is this how you show your respect for me?'—Come on, now—'You have the audacity, you rascal, to tie yourself up without your father's consent. . . Answer me you rogue, answer me! Let's hear what you have to say for yourself?'

What the devil—you seem completely nonplussed!

O. Yes—you sound so much like my father.

Scapin. Well, that's the very reason why you mustn't stand there like an idiot. . .

O. I'll be more determined this time. I'll put a bold face on it.

Scapin. Sure?

O. Certain.

Scapin. That's good, for here comes your father!

O. Heavens! I'm done for! (Runs off) (71-2)

One cannot but be aware of the theatrical analogies between this scene and II, iv of *I Henry IV*, wherein Falstaff, playing the part of the King, sets out to coach Prince Hal for the arrival of his father. Both scenes represent theater within theater. In Molière's play it is Scapin who directs, criticizes, or praises O's acting. In Shakespeare's, it is Mistress Quickly who comments on Falstaff's demeanor when he acts the King. Yet in Molière's work the son remains the frightened creature that comedy bids him be, while Prince Hal quickly switches roles with Falstaff and, as the King, chides Falstaff-Prince

for leading his son astray. Shakespeare's scene, with its double irony and brilliant dialogue, assumes subtleties and complexities that are not present in Molière's comedy and that have given rise to numerous interpretations. For our discussion it is immaterial, however, to choose between those critics who—as Barber suggests—believe that Hal's attitude here already foreshadows his future repudiation and scapegoating of Falstaff and those who think—like Battenhouse—that Hal, true son of his father, fails to see here or anywhere the deep-felt truths Falstaff tries to convey to him under the guise of the clown. What is relevant to us is the obvious existence of theatrical patterns that, both in their similarities and their dissimilarities, attest to a theatrical trickster tradition of which Shakespeare as well as Molière partook. Shakespeare was not known in France when Molière staged his comedy in 1671. But Italy may well have been their common inspiration. Molière's Scapin clearly took his name from the Italian *commedia dell'arte* mask Scappino, so well known that Callot included him in his famous sketches. In preserving the character's trickster ambivalence, the French playwright stressed above all his light-hearted laughter tinged with only the vaguest hue of suffering. Shakespearean genius made the ambivalent figure fit his own more profound and complex dramatic ambitions.

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Notes

¹Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American-Indian Mythology, with Commentaries by Karl Kerényi and C.G. Jung* (London: Rutledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 260.

²Edith Kern, *The Absolute Comic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 121.

³C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1959), p. 195.

⁴Roy Battenhouse, "Falstaff as Parodist and Perhaps Holy Fool," *PMLA*, 90 (1975), 32-52.

⁵Molière, "The Scoundrel Scapin" in *The Miser and Other Plays*, John Wood, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1953).

Darkness Lightened: A.L. Rowse's Dark Lady Once More by Paul Ramsey

A.L. Rowse's much-discussed candidate for the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Emilia Bassano Lanier, is, I held in *The Fickle Glass*, a possible candidate, neither proven nor refuted.¹ This essay shall have a look at some new evidence against her candidacy.

Emilia Bassano Lanier *is* a candidate largely because of her Italian descent, which would seem to make it likely that she had the requisite dark hair and dark eyes.

How likely? Evidence is available and unencouraging to Rowse's case.

Rowse informs us that Emilia's father was Baptista Bassano² and that the "Bassanos were a numerous clan who came into...[England] from Venice in the later years of Henry VIII."³ How likely is it that a sixteenth century Venetian would have dark hair and dark eyes?

According to G.A. Harrison, "the gradient of increasing bloneness from south to north in Italy is...well known"⁴ and shows that, in the area (quite far north in Italy) which includes Venice that 16.4 to 22.4 percent of the inhabitants have both dark hair and dark eyes.⁵

Those figures can be at least roughly extrapolated backwards to the sixteenth century. According to the Hardy-Weinberg law, the genetic mix (phenotypes) of a population stays the same generation after generation, assuming random mating and barring heavy mutation or emigration or immigration.⁶ Marcello Boldrini states that "aside from the large cities, we may say that the anthropological composition [of Italy] is not very different from what it was in the time of Augustus."⁷ Venice, a great city, may then be something of an exception to the extrapolation, but the variation, if any, could go either way, and I know no reason to believe that the variation between the sixteenth century and modern times would be considerable.

Thus, on the best evidence available, had Emilia Bassano Lanier been born of a Venetian father and mother, the odds are between 16.4 and 22.4 percent that she would have dark hair and dark eyes. But her mother was named Margaret Johnson,⁸ an unlikely name for a brunette, and hence the odds are lowered further.

How much further depends on some assuming. Let us assume that dark hair and dark eyes always accompany each other (an assumption in Rowse's favor, since we all know some exceptions), and that dark-hair-and-eyes depend on a genetic situation in which there are only two genes, one for darkness and one for non-darkness (a distinctly simplified assumption⁹ probably in Rowse's favor), that the gene for darkness is dominant (an

assumption in Rowse's favor), that the highest figures (22.4 percent) be used for the area of Italy which includes Venice, (an assumption in Rowse's favor), and that 10 percent of people named Johnson in England in the sixteenth century had dark hair and dark eyes (an assumption in Rowse's favor, since the figure seems high), then the child of a sixteenth-century Venetian and a woman in England named Johnson would have a 15.2 percent chance of having dark hair and dark eyes.¹⁰

Hence, on the available evidence (interpreted in every point I can in Rowse's favor) vis-a-vis dark hair and dark eyes, the odds are over five to one against Emilia Bassano Lanier having dark hair and dark eyes, and hence over five to one against Emilia Bassano Lanier's being the Dark Lady of Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Even were it somehow to be shown that Venice had a substantially higher percentage of dark-haired and dark-eyed people than the immediately surrounding area—which seems unlikely—the odds would still be substantially against Emilia Bassano Lanier having dark hair and dark eyes. If, for instance, in Venice 30 percent of the people had dark hair and dark eyes, the odds would still be over five to one against Rowse's candidate.

Interpreted in relation to other evidence, especially the evidence that her husband's name was not Will (Rowse correctly took her husband's name's being Will as some evidence for her when he believed that her husband was named Will, but ceased to mention the name as evidence when he learned that her husband was named Alfonso)¹¹ and the uncomfortable squeeze of her wedding date in relation to the dating of the Sonnets (a subject I shall discuss in my edition of Shakespeare's sonnets), the evidence establishes a probability against her.

I respect A.L. Rowse as an historian, a literary critic, and a poet, and do not wish to engage in the polemical thumpings to and fro this issue has produced. One is grateful to Rowse for his work as an historian, including his discoveries concerning Simon Forman, for his bringing forth information about a very interesting and lively woman, and for his good edition of Emilia Bassano Lanier's able poetry. But, on the available evidence, the odds are against Emilia Bassano Lanier's being Shakespeare's Dark Lady.

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Notes

¹Paul Ramsey, *The Fickle Glass: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), p. 21.

²A.L. Rowse, "Shakespeare's Dark Lady," in Emilia Lanier, *The Poems of Shakespeare's Dark Lady: Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, ed. A.L. Rowse (London: Jonathan Cape, 1978), p. 13.

³Rowse, p. 14.

⁴G.A. Harrison, J.S. Weiner, J.M. Tanner, and N.A. Barnicot, *Human Biology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 223.

⁵Harrison, p. 245, Figure 14e.

⁶Harrison, p. 153. Cf. Eldon J. Gardner, *Principles of Genetics*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: John Wiley and Sons, 1964), pp. 307-308 and context; and G.H. Hardy, "Mendelian Proportions in a Mixed Population," in *Classic Papers in Genetics*, ed. James A. Peter (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959), pp. 60-62.

⁷Marcello Boldrini, "Italy: The People," *Encyclopedia Americana* (New York: Americana Corporation, 1957), 15: 467.

⁸Rowse, in Lanier, *Poems*, p. 14.

⁹Jean Rostard, *Human Heredity*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), p. 24 (and see context, pp. 22-26) suggests that the gene for brown eyes is dominant over the gene for blue eyes. Harrison, *Biology*, p. 223, says that "the genetics of hair colours have been inadequately studied. . . Variation in darkness and lightness due to melanin content probably depends on many genes." C.O. Carter, *Human Heredity* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 92-94, discusses certain complexities of eye-color inheritance, finding that there are at least three alleles (for dark-brown, grey, and hazel) involved, and proposing that for dark-brown eyes a dark-brown gene must be present from each parent (p. 92). (He defines *alleles* as "alternative forms of a gene, which may occur at a single gene-locus," p. 38).

Black eyes or hair are actually very dark-brown; they have more melanin than other eyes or hair; the amount of melanin increases as the scale moves from light brown toward black.

None of these complications affect the chief point: a child born of parents, one of whom came from an area where there were 22.4 percent dark-haired-and-dark-eyed persons, and the other of whom came from a group of 10 percent dark-haired-and-dark-eyed members, would have a chance of being dark-haired-and-dark-eyed somewhere between 22.4 percent and 10 percent. If, for instance, two dark-brown genes are required for dark-brown eyes and hair, then probability would be 14.7 percent instead of the 16.7 percent arrived at in my text on the stated assumptions (see text and next note).

¹⁰The method of arriving at the figure 16.7 percent depends on Hardy, in *Classics*, ed. Peter, pp. 61-62, and Harrison, *Biology*, pp. 151-154.

¹¹See Ramsey, *Glass*, p. 169, notes 5 and 6.

Power to Hurt: Sonnets 109-10 and 117-20

by Michael Cameron Andrews

As Richard A. Lanham has remarked, "A lot of getting even goes on in the sonnets."¹ In Sonnets 109-10 and 117-20, the speaker and his friend exchange roles. The speaker has already experienced the agony and humiliation of betrayal (e.g., Sonnets 40-42); now the friend must undergo what he formerly occasioned.² These are not among Shakespeare's finest sonnets. Yet they are remarkable, even among the Sonnets, for their penetration into "the darkest of all naturall secretes, which is the harte of Man."³ Deeply disturbing poems, they reveal not only that the speaker has never forgiven his friend, but that he is on double business bound: even as he sues for reconciliation and promises undying love, he punishes, inflicts pain. For he is not (as might seem) at the friend's mercy; he has him where he wants him. He has—and uses—the power to hurt.

"O never say that I was false of heart,"⁴ the speaker exclaims in Sonnet 109, arguing that his absence has been like that of a traveler who "return[s] again, / Just to the time, not with the time exchanged, / So that myself bring water for my stain" (6-8). But the traveler image does not reassure: it makes one wonder where he has been—and what he has done to sully himself. Nor does the assertion that water (tears) will suffice to cleanse him suggest more than a superficial sense of guilt.⁵ How false has he been—if not false of heart? The sonnet continues, in eloquence and vigor:

Never believe, though in my nature reigned
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good. . . .(9-12)

Yet, undeniably, he *has* left (else he could not return); he must have left for *something*. The couplet, which blandly asserts: "For nothing this wide universe I call / Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all," is as complacent as unconvincing.

Sonnet 110 is more direct, but ultimately more deceptive. The speaker begins with a self-loathing which is altogether absent from 109:

Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offenses of affections new.

So much, then, for the traveler image of 109. The speaker does not now deny that he has been false; instead, he attempts to show how much his transgressions have edified him:

Most true it is that I have looked on truth
 Askance and strangely; but, by all above,
 Those blenches gave my heart another youth,
 And worse essays proved thee my best of love. (5-8)

This is, of course, the right thing to say, since it is what the aggrieved other wishes to hear. As if the task of reconciliation were not complete, the speaker offers the gift of himself:

Now all is done, have what shall have no end:
 Mine appetite I never more will grind
 On newer proof, to try an older friend,
 A god in love, to whom I am confined.
 Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
 Even to thy pure and most most loving breast. (9-14)

What Elizabethan poet—or reader of poetry—could miss the ironic echo of *Epithalamion*: “Now al is done; bring home the bride againe” (1. 242)?⁶ Yet even as he speaks of eternal union in love, he inflicts pain by his reference to grinding his appetite on newer proof—surely no way to put fears to sleep. There is more than one way to “try” a friend.⁷ What has happened before may, after all, be repeated; and *grinding*, like tearing one’s pleasure with rough strife, has great visceral force. Nor is this all. The speaker tells us that the road of infidelity has led to the palace of fidelity; but even as he calls his friend “A god in love,” he says he is “confined” to him. There are more positive ways to express one’s sense of what fidelity means. The couplet, however, exalts the friend as “next my heaven the best,” before ending in a line that dies in its own too much—a most cloying line.⁸

What is fascinating about this sonnet is the way the speaker uses both self-abasement and cruelty to exercise power over the friend. The sonnet, which on one level is reassuring, proves to be nothing of the sort. The speaker alludes to his infidelities in a painfully vivid way and implies the never-ending commitment (in ironic contrast to *Epithalamion*) is poetic hyperbole, not truth. Instead of increasing the friend’s sense of security, he leaves him tense, confused, resting in unrest.⁹

Sonnet 117, a much less complex poem, invites the friend to “Book both my wilfulness and errors down” (9). The speaker, however, has already prepared his appeal: “my appeal says I did strive to prove / The constancy and virtue of your love” (13-14). As in Sonnet 110, what is at best a partial truth—and certainly a flattering one—is presented as the sole motive. The note of calculation present in both 109 and 110 is more pronounced, increasing the sense of the speaker’s insincerity.¹⁰

Sonnet 118 provides another rationale for what the speaker has done. It is also far more impressively expressed, being an instance of the “terse, subtle, obscure” style described by Patrick Cruttwell:¹¹

Like as to make our appetites more keen,
 With eager compounds we our palates urge;
 As to prevent our maladies unseen,
 We sicken to shun sickness when we purge;
 Even so, being full of your ne'er cloying sweetness,
 To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding;
 And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness
 To be diseased ere that there was true needing.
 Thus policy in love, t'anticipate
 The ills that were not, grew to faults assured,
 And brought to medicine a healthy state
 Which, rank to goodness, would by ills be cured.
 But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
 Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

What is one to make of this extraordinary argument? It is easier to believe that the speaker, fearing abandonment, has sought love from others, than that he has merely sought "to prove / The constancy and virtue of [the friend's] love." But this "policy in love" is a good deal simpler than the logic and imagery the speaker actually employs. If the friend is indeed "ne'er cloying," why did the speaker grow "full" and feel the need for the "bitter sauces" provided by others? He has, after all, fallen "sick of you." And were the others as unpleasant as "eager compounds," "bitter sauces," and purging would make them out to be? As in Sonnet 110, the speaker subverts his own hyperboles, creating anxieties while pleading reconciliation. This way of characterizing past infidelities appears the real policy in love.¹²

Sonnet 119 carries the argument further, treating his misconduct as a kind of *felix culpa*: because of his "wretched errors," his "madding fever," the speaker now loves his friend more than he could had he never strayed:

O benefit of ill; now I find true
 That better is by evil still made better;
 And ruined love, when it is built anew,
 Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
 So I return rebuked to my content,
 And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent. (9-14)

Here there seems no covert intention to wound, and the tone is rather breezy: how delightfully *felix culpa*! There is one moment, however, in which the speaker says something deeply disquieting. For "ruined love" expresses a sense of devastation so extreme as to call attention to the cosmetic quality of the rhetoric used elsewhere. Ruined love is rarely so successfully rebuilt.¹³ And even here, of course, the speaker says nothing of the friend's love for him.

In the sonnets that we have considered, the speaker's ostensible purpose has been to seek reconciliation. His deeper motives must be inferred. But in Sonnet 120, after so many bypaths and indirect crooked ways, he finally

expresses what he feels.

The speaker begins as if he were going to transcend the solipsistic perspective of Sonnet 119: remembering the friend's infidelity, he says, makes him realize what the friend must now be suffering:

That you were once unkind befriends me now,
 And for that sorrow which I then did feel
 Needs must I under my transgression bow,
 Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel.
 For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
 As I by yours, you've passed a hell of time. . . (1-6)

The odd aspect of this is its cerebral quality—as if the speaker were expressing what he knows he *ought* to feel, but does not experience. "Needs must I under my transgression bow," by itself, is the language of necessity; but "Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel" suggests that the nerves resist—one thinks of Claudius, with "stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel," trying to pray (*Hamlet*, III. i. 70). Indeed, the speaker, who has such a keen sense of his own suffering, has not got around to responding to that of his friend:¹⁴

And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken
 To weigh how once I suffered in your crime.
 O that our night of woe might have rememb' red
 My deepest sense how hard true sorrow hits,
 And soon to you, as you to me then, tend' red
 The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!
 But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
 Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me. (7-14)

By emphasizing the friend's prompt tendering of "the humble salve which wounded bosoms fits," the speaker holds up two models for emulation—the friend as penitent transgressor, and himself as forgiving victim. The friend, who must surely know his own offenses cut deep, is thus reminded of the speaker's magnanimity in forgiving him. How can he, now that the roles have been reversed, fail to do likewise? If, in short, the speaker plays *his* role, reconciliation should follow.

But of course the speaker has withheld "humble salve"—the initiative is still his; he is in control. Nor does he have any intention of courting forgiveness. He looks at the past askance and strangely, misrepresenting his own feelings; he also misrepresents his present ones. He did not forgive then, and does not now. To discern his real feelings is not difficult. For him to reflect, "if you were by my unkindness shaken, / As I by yours, you've passed a hell of time," is more satisfying than painful. Even if the speaker doubts that the friend's suffering matches his own, he knows he has suffered greatly. Nor can one miss the sense of pleasing potency in the tyrant image—and in these

punishing poems, he *is* something of a tyrant. But there is falseness in the image too. He wishes to represent himself as not having been aware of the friend's plight: "And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken"—a pretense exploded in the next line: "To weigh how once I suffered in your crime." He is a tyrant precisely because he remembers his own suffering; he regards what the friend has done as a *crime*. Now there is no further pretense, no masquerade of protestation or apology. There is only the cynical directness of the couplet:

But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.(13-14)

Measure for measure, betrayal for betrayal.

These sonnets, then, are intended to punish, to inflict pain. That in itself is dark enough. What is darker, as Sonnet 120 strongly suggests, is that they may have more to do with revenge than love. That the friend deeply injured the speaker in the past is clear; equally so, that the speaker cannot forgive him. He is more concerned with exercising punitive power, with humiliating and subjugating, than with reconciliation. Whatever else his transgressions may be, they are a way of settling accounts. The same may be said of the sonnets which speak of them.

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Notes

¹*The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven, 1976), p. 119.

²In "Sincerity and Subterfuge in Three Shakespearean Sonnet Groups," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33 (1982), 314-27, I argue that in Sonnets 33-35, 40-42, and 87-96, "the speaker's deepest emotions are fundamentally ambivalent. . . . What [he] sees and feels. . . renders him incapable of total sincerity" (p. 327).

As in "Sincerity and Subterfuge," I assume the essential integrity of the 1609 order. Recent arguments in its support include Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London, 1979), pp. 6-13, and Paul Ramsey, *The Fickle Glass: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York, 1979), pp. 8-16.

³*The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (1912; rpt. Cambridge, Eng., 1963), p. 410.

⁴All quotations from Shakespeare are taken from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, gen. ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore, 1969).

⁵As Philip Martin notes, "Water is needed for the poet's 'staine,' but this he himself can provide. One is to suppose, I think, that the self-examination has not gone very deep so far' (*Shakespeare's Sonnets: Self, Love and Art* [Cambridge, Eng., 1972], p. 75). Cf. Stephen Booth, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven, 1977), pp. 351-52.

⁶*The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser*, ed. R.E. Neil Dodge (Boston, 1908). That Shakespeare is echoing Spenser appears altogether more likely than the reverse. *Epithalamion* was published in 1595. Ramsey would place the Sonnets c. 1591-94 (pp. 43-62); Muir quotes with approval Claes Schaar's view that "the vast majority of the sonnets. . . seem to have been written between 1591-2 and 1594-5" (p. 4). However, G. Blakemore Evans, textual editor of *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston, 1974), places them 1593-99 (p. 49).

⁷That the speaker sins at least in part because doing so injures the friend is, of course, one meaning of the phrase.

⁸See Booth, pp. 357-59. J.W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, 2nd ed. (London, 1966), argues that the language of this sonnet is appropriate for "expressing the vehemence of the speaker in a tense dramatic situation" (p. 239).

⁹For a different view, see Martin, p. 75.

¹⁰To Wilson Knight, who regards 117 as "an admission, as by a concerned man, that he has incurred a just accusation," the couplet is "the lamest of lame expedients, and might almost be ironical" (*The Mutual Flame* [London, 1955], p. 124). See also Lever, p. 241.

¹¹*The Shakespearean Moment* (New York, 1960), p. 61.

¹²For a radically different interpretation of Sonnet 118, see Knight, pp. 124-27.

¹³Cf. Lever, p. 241: "the poorer the Poet's logic, the more urgent is the force of emotion that he seeks to rationalize." Booth remarks that lines 11 and 12 "echo a very popular proverb that goes back at least to Terence (*Andria*, III. iii. 23): 'The falling out of lovers is a renewing of love'" (p. 403). But one should not confuse "ruined love" with a mere "falling out."

¹⁴See David K. Weiser, "'I' and 'Thou' in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Journal of English and German Philology*, 76 (1977), 524. Cf. C.L. Barber, "An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets," in Paul J. Alpers, ed., *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism* (New York, 1967), p. 320: "Few poems have expressed so close to the heart and nerves as 120 the transformation of suffering into compassion." See also Stephen Spender, "The Alike and the Other," in *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York, 1962), pp. 105-06; Hilton Landry, "The Marriage of True Minds: Truth and Error in Sonnet 116," *Shakespeare Studies*, 3 (1967), 102; and Booth, pp. 404-08.

Prince Hal's Reformation Soliloquy: A "Macro-Sonnet" by Dale C. Uhlmann

Prince Hal's famous "reformation soliloquy" in Act 1, scene 2 of *1 Henry IV* is a self-characterizing speech which is something more than a monologue existing for the sake of exposition. Samuel Johnson, J. Dover Wilson, John Bailey, and Robert Ornstein are among those who have traditionally viewed the soliloquy as a means of assuring the audience of Hal's resolve to prove himself a true and worthy prince, despite appearances to the contrary.¹ However, Hal's speech is more than a soliloquy. The speech is in reality an expanded sonnet, or what one might well term a "macro-sonnet," a deliberate imitation of the sonnet form as a means of signalling a momentous event in the play—Hal's revelation of character. For this soliloquy, Shakespeare uses a special poetic mode to demonstrate the importance of that event. As an extended sonnet, the soliloquy employs a number of conventions that are put to similar use in the sonnets themselves, and its structure is a clear expansion of the form which Shakespeare had helped to make so famous.

Structurally, Shakespeare's expanded sonnet is a complex analogy in which Hal is determined to use what others may feel to be his own "delinquencies" as a springboard for "future glorification."² Rhetorically, its argument is presented in sonnet format, a four-part argument developed throughout the equivalence of three quatrains and a rhyming couplet:³

I know you all, and will a while uphold
The unyok'd humor of your idleness,
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wond'red at
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapors that did seem to strangle him.

If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.

So when this loose behavior I throw off
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes,
And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glitt'ring o'er my fault,
Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

I'll so offend, to make offense a skill,
 Redeeming time when men think least I will.
 (I. ii. 195-217)

One should briefly note the movement of the argument itself. The four part analogy moves in a general-specific pattern of development, from moral behavior which, like the sun, is hidden by base companions, to a precise political action, a reformation, that glitters "like bright metal on a sullen ground." Like the sonnet form that it is obviously patterned after, the soliloquy develops the terms of the argument throughout three quatrains, each quatrain separately specifying, in ever increasing concreteness, the nature of the plan, with the rhyming couplet bringing the analogy to its specific conclusion.

In the first "quatrain" (I. ii. 195-203), Shakespeare introduces a very appropriate image. Like the sun, Hal will allow himself to be hidden by "base contagious clouds," through association with Falstaff and his gang, so that he will seldom be viewed in proper perspective or glory. However, at the proper time, the Prince will "break through the foul and ugly mists," and, like the sun which attracts attention and admiration in England when it does shine with all its brilliance at infrequent intervals, be honored for his resulting change of character and splendor. The second "quatrain" (I. ii. 204-207) expands the argument by employing the "If. . . Then" type of development frequently found in the sonnets.⁴ Hal admits that if holidays were constant, merriment would become tiresome and mundane, but like holidays that are enjoyable because of their very infrequency—or "seldom come, they wish'd for come"—Hal's change of character or "rare accident" will prove highly effective in terms of gaining glorification. As in a sonnet, the successive sections of the soliloquy consider the precise consequences of such an action, as signified by the "so" in line 14. Thus, the third "quatrain" (I. ii. 208-215) stresses the importance of contrast in Hal's scheme; his political reformation will be all the more impressive because it will shine brightly against the background of previous faults. It is in the fourth part of the argument, the couplet, that Hal concludes his plan. In typical sonnet format, it is the couplet which completes the argument by stating the precise moral and political methods which Hal will use: he will "make offense a skill," "redeeming time" when it is expedient to do so.

This expanded sonnet, then, is similar to a conventional sonnet in structure. Each expanded "quatrain" develops the idea in ever increasing detail. But the soliloquy also mirrors the sonnet structure in terms of punctuation, as well as structure. As in a quatrain-couplet format, each "quatrain" of the soliloquy is clearly marked by punctuation, a period signifying a new development of Hal's plan. The fact that these periods are present in the original Folio further suggests that Shakespeare may have

deliberately used the punctuation as an imitation of the quatrain-couplet structure of the sonnet from the very beginning.⁵

As in the sonnets, the reformation soliloquy features a number of distinctive stylistic devices, a further indication of the relationship of sonnet to "macro-sonnet." One such technique is "anaphora," or word repetition within a work of poetry. As in the sonnets, the soliloquy abounds with examples of anaphora and its many sub-units, such as "epanaphora"—the use of a word repeated in the beginning of different clauses—and "epiphora"—the use of a word repeated at the end of clauses.⁶ In addition to anaphora and its sub-classifications, the soliloquy features a recurring use of alliteration. For instance, strong epanaphora is used in lines 202, 210, and 211 of the speech: "*By* breaking through the foul and ugly mists. . . *By how much* better than my word I am, / *By so much* shall I falsify men's hopes." In addition, Shakespeare makes use of epiphora in line 206: "But when they seldom *come*, they wish'd for *come*." Furthermore, alliteration is present throughout the monologue: in line 195—"I know you all, and *will* a *while* uphold"—in line 198—"Who doth permit the base *contagious clouds*"—in line 202—"By *breaking* through the foul and ugly mists"—in line 205—"To sport would be as *tedious* as *to work*"—and in line 215—"Than *that* which hath no foil to set it off." Although alliteration is certainly present in other speeches and passages throughout the play, it is nowhere put to more frequent and skillful use than in the reformation soliloquy.

An even stronger similarity between sonnet and "macro-sonnet" is the presence of striking verbal parallels between Sonnet 33 and the reformation soliloquy. Lines 5 and 6 of Sonnet 33—"Anon permit the basest clouds to ride / With ugly rack on his celestial face"⁷—is, of course, almost identical to Hal's resolve to imitate the sun—"Who doth permit the base contagious clouds/To smother up his visage from the world." Although the sun analogy does occur throughout Shakespeare's history plays, as well as in many of the sonnets, the verbal similarities between this sonnet and Hal's soliloquy are highly significant, since they suggest the playwright's imitation and embellishment of poetic structure.

Prince Hal's reformation soliloquy, then, is certainly a much more complex device than we may have thought. For this is more than a soliloquy; the argument itself is a truly unique and ingenious form—an extended sonnet. The soliloquy so mirrors the conventional sonnet format that it is most assuredly a "macro-sonnet," a truly effective extension and embellishment of an accepted poetic convention. Its use demonstrates Shakespeare's penchant for expanding and embellishing literary structure for the purpose of dramatic exposition and characterization. Shakespeare's "macro-sonnet," then, is an invention which exemplifies his ingenuity and versatility in the use of sources available to the literary craftsman.

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Notes

¹See especially J. Dover Wilson, C.H., *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 41-43, and Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 135-138. Wilson cites Johnson, Bailey, and others in supporting his argument that Hal has been misjudged and is determined to prove a worthy king, despite all appearances to the contrary; Bailey asks, "What is the harm in Hal's wishing to prove his true worth to others?," and Johnson asserts that this speech is "very artfully introduced to keep the Prince from appearing vile in the opinion of the audience." Ornstein feels that Hal "is not prodigal in temperament at all, and certainly not a happy-go-lucky youth indifferent to his royal future." One might also consider Hugh Dickinson, "The Reformation of Prince Hal," *SQ*, 19 (1961), 13-26; David Berkeley and Donald Eidson, "The Theme of *Henry IV*, Part 1," *SQ*, 19 (1968), 25-31; Alan G. Gross, "The Text of Hal's First Soliloquy," *English Miscellany*, 18 (1967), 49-54; U.C. Knoepfmacher, "The Humors as Symbolic Nucleus in *Henry IV*, Part 1," *College English*, 24 (April, 1963), 497-501; and Arthur C. Sprague, *Shakespeare's Histories: Plays for the Stage* (London, 1964), pp. 50-72.

²Morris LeRoy Arnold, *The Soliloquies of Shakespeare: A Study in Technic* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1965), p. 58.

³All quotations from the play are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974).

⁴See, for example, Sonnet 12, in which the development of the central problem stated in line 1—"When I do count the clock that tells the time"—undergoes a change, as marked by a slight turn or "volta" in line 9: "Then of thy beauty I do question make."

⁵Obviously one must be careful in basing any theory on textual punctuation, since printers often punctuated according to their own tastes or exigencies. However, in *The Norton Facsimile, The First Folio of Shakespeare* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1968), Charlton Hinman notes that Folio proofreading, while often both "desultory" and "superficial," became (for a time, at least) much more thorough following the discovery that a passage of two complete lines had been omitted from the final page of *Richard II*. As a result, "about a third of the pages in the next play, *1 Henry IV*, were press corrected," resulting in the production of "twenty-eight variants" (p. xxv). Such careful proofreading may well have accounted for the "re-lineation in both prose and verse passages" (p. lxxii) that A.R. Humphreys refers to in the Arden Edition of *1 Henry IV* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960). This "re-lineation," at least in part, may have been undertaken in an effort to preserve QO's precise detail and punctuation, punctuation which Humphreys admits "has dramatic points that look like Shakespeare's own" (p. lxxviii). Such "dramatic points," I contend, include the presence of periods at the end of each "quatrain" in the reformation soliloquy, a fact which, again, suggests deliberate imitation of the sonnet form.

⁶Paul Ramsey, *The Fickle Glass: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), p. 104.

⁷Evans et al., *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1755.

Shakespeare's Iago: The Kierkegaardian Aesthete

by William E. Bennett

The chameleonic character of Iago from Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello* has been much discussed, but never adequately accounted for. He has been compared—always pejoratively—with Milton's Satan, with Goethe's Mephistopheles, and with Vice and Evil incarnate in the morality plays. But none of these responses seems to lend credibility to the actions of Iago, the man. Iago's character is difficult to plumb because he is such a consummate liar that he does not even believe himself.

Although Shakespeare gives Iago some cause for disappointment, his jealous hatred of Othello and Michael Cassio seems to grow out of a much deadlier motive than not receiving promotion. Iago himself seems generally unimpressed with military "preferment."

Why there's no remedy. 'Tis the curse of service;
Preferment goes by letter and affection,
And not by old gradation, where each second
Stood heir to th' first. (I. i. 34-37)¹

According to A.C. Bradley, Iago's machinations suggest a character devoid of all human sentiment, a moral automaton. In this view Iago becomes "a thoroughly bad, *cold* man," one who displays "a most abnormal *deadness* of human feeling." At another point Bradley reiterates the words "deadly coldness" and "deadness of feeling." Iago is here pictured as a man anaesthetized—cold, dead, without feeling, destitute of humanity.²

There is a paradox in Bradley's thinking. He has explained Iago's evil character and actions by describing his *feelings* of delight, hauteur, hatred, irritation, passion—none of which can be ascribed to an anaesthetized man.

It seems more profitable—however anachronistic—to describe Iago as the very embodiment of the Kierkegaardian aesthete. Traditionally, the word *aesthetic* has suggested beauty, particularly artistic beauty. However, in the writings of Kierkegaard, "aesthetic" retains its etymological sense of *aisthesis*, that is, "sense perception." Kierkegaard defines the aesthetic as a "dimension of existence and as an overall design for living by means of the immediate. The aesthetic. . . is that by which [man] is *immediately* what he is."³

Kierkegaard's definition of *aesthetic* is antithetical to Bradley's explanations of Iago's character, since *aesthetic* is the etymological opposite of *anaesthetic*, as has been indicated. Iago, of course, never develops beyond the aesthetic to the ethical or religious stages which Kierkegaard prescribes.

He remains frozen in the posture of the aesthete throughout Shakespeare's play. One of the major components of the aesthete is his sensitivity to what is directly presented and to sensually perceived experience. "Life as it is before it doubles back upon itself in the mediation of self-consciousness is immediate existence! If Nature be opposed to the reflexive operations of freedom, then a man's immediacy is what he is 'by nature'."

Iago revels in the aesthetic delight derived from each machination, each act of treachery. Examples of this pleasure in immediacy are numerous. When Iago first arouses Brabantio to tell him of Desdemona's marriage to Othello, Brabantio objects to the interruption of his sleep, whereupon Iago exclaims:

Because we come to do you service, and you think we are ruffians,
you'll have your daughter cover'd with a Barbary horse, you'll have
your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins, and
gennets for germans. (I. i. 109-13)

These words shouted to Brabantio bring immediate joy to Iago, who is always archly aware of irony and humor. Another instance of Iago's joy in immediacy occurs after the night of Cassio's disgrace when Iago exclaims:

. . . By the mass, 'tis morning;
Pleasure and action make the hours seem short. . . .
. . . Ay, that's the way;
Dull not device by coldness and delay. (II. iii. 378-79; 387-88)

Furthermore, the Kierkegaardian aesthete must always have his own way. Iago's self delight is never more obvious than in the well-known scene where Othello *thinks* Iago is discussing Desdemona with Cassio. Actually, Iago is talking about Bianca, a common strumpet. The sudden appearance of the handkerchief offers further testimony of Desdemona's apparent betrayal.

All of this trumped up "evidence" drives Othello to plan his crime in the name of justice. Iago is so successful in manipulating Othello's jealousy that he can hardly contain himself. He even offers to plan Desdemona's murder, suggesting that she be smothered in the very bed that she defiled. He kneels in "loyalty" to Othello, swears his allegiance, and asks then for the privilege of murdering Cassio.

The art of living, then, becomes for Iago—the Kierkegaardian aesthete—the "most fastidious self-discipline." He moves from victim to victim in an elaborate rotation scheme—a scheme inveigling Roderigo, Cassio, Bianca, Othello, Desdemona, and Emilia. His masterplan is not casually arranged, but is enjoyed to the fullest—each act is aesthetically self-contained, but leads to one overwhelming catastrophe that sweeps even Iago before its wake.

The antithesis which exists between what the other characters think of

"honest Iago" and what he really is becomes apparent in an early statement of Iago to Roderigo: "I am not what I am." (I. i. 65) The duplicity—even multiplicity—of Iago is evident throughout the play.

Iago rarely resorts to force to accomplish his ends. More often he deploys a technique reminiscent of Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus. Climacus thinks that "all love, poetically viewed, is essentially faithless." Because Iago views the love of Othello and Desdemona as lust, he feels perfectly free to manipulate the lovers, again in the fashion of Kierkegaard's Climacus. He convinces Cassio that Desdemona will soon tire of Othello; he manipulates the fate of Othello by "proving" Desdemona's faithlessness.

"The perennial threat to the aesthetic person's insouciance is misfortune, and the supreme misfortune is death." Misfortune constitutes the aesthete's absolute frustration, and Iago's downfall comes from a completely unsuspected quarter—from Emilia, who in her love for Desdemona pieces together the fragments which spell the end of Iago.

The aesthetic integrity of Iago's character lies in his being true to what he is. Unlike most of us, he knows that the world falls into two vast camps. He is never in doubt for a moment which camp he inhabits.

Many a duteous and knee-crooking knave
That, doting on his own obsequious bondage
Wears out his time, much like his master's ass,
For nought but provender, and when he's old, cashier'd. (I. i. 45-48)

And then there are those "fellows [who] have some soul"

Who, trimm'd in forms and visages of duty,
Keep yet their hearts attending on themselves. (I. i. 50-51)

Iago assures us: "such a one do I profess myself."

When confronted by Othello for explanations at the denouement, he answers: "Demand me nothing; what you know, you know./From this time forth I never will speak word." (V. ii. 303-304) Iago's final words offer no explanations, no remorse, no reflexive thinking—only the respect of the Kierkegaardian aesthete for his "poetry of inwardness."

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Notes

¹All quotations are taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974). This paper was first presented at a meeting of the Tennessee Philological Association in Martin, Tennessee, in March, 1971.

²*Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904; rpt. London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 178. Iago is the subject of Lecture VI, pp. 169-198. All subsequent references are drawn from that lecture.

³These and all subsequent quotations are drawn from Kierkegaard's long discussion of the difference between the aesthetic and ethical views of life to be found on pp. 161-221 of vol. II of *Either/Or*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1944). The present quotation is located on p. 182.

The Gravediggers' Scene: A Unifying Thread in *Hamlet*

by William E. Bennett

The gravediggers' scene in *Hamlet* (V. i. 1-239) with its sudden intrusion of rough prose—following the lyrically elegiac beauty of the Queen's explanation of Ophelia's death to Laertes—is doubtless one of the most important scenes in the play because it grows organically from the main plot, bringing into dramatic focus parts of the play which are seemingly disparate. Far from being "comic relief" or merely an outgrowth of a subplot, this scene is placed with dramaturgical genius immediately before the scene of Hamlet's regeneration after his enactment of his own *De Contemptu Mundi*. Furthermore, many of Hamlet's actions are clarified somewhat by his speech and behavior during the scene.

If great tragedy can be said to involve an inner breakdown because humanity is unable to confront life, much less cope with it, then Hamlet is undeniably one of the greatest tragic heroes of all time. He represents the human being trying to confront death or to cope with it.

Assuming with Bradley and others that Prince Hamlet suffered from the disease of melancholia, one should see that the talk of "gard'ners, ditchers, and gravemakers" (V. i. 29-30) is but an extension of the humour, black bile, and to its corresponding element, earth. More important to understanding the character of Hamlet, the scene shows the entwining of various psychological attitudes with the disease of melancholia, helping to account for the physical and mental vagaries of the Prince of Denmark.

Hamlet's dialogue with Horatio and with the skulls could then be construed as an extrapolation of his awareness of his own physical and mental feelings, a psychological projection of his death-wish or of his identification with death. A "dead" man is probably given to indecision and inaction.

Viewing the first two-hundred and thirty-nine lines of the act in this light (V. i. 1-239), one can begin to penetrate Hamlet's first comment and to see its subjective significance to the young prince:

Has this fellow no feeling of his
business, that he sings at grave-making? (73-74)¹

Hamlet is asking, in effect, why he (Hamlet) has received the same type of treatment to which the unfeeling digger is subjecting the skulls. As the first gravedigger sings, Hamlet says to Horatio:

That skull had a tongue in it, and could
sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as
if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder!
It might be the pate of a politician which this ass
now o'erreaches—one that would circumvent
God, might it not? (V. i. 83-8)

Hamlet is doubtless thinking in his *memento mori* that he, himself, might just as well not have had a tongue. He can no longer sing; he has not even openly accused Claudius of murdering his father, King Hamlet. His accusations have been as secret as the grave itself, enhanced only by the presence of a ghost and a few followers sworn to secrecy.

Watching the knave jowling the skull to the ground, Prince Hamlet perhaps upbraids himself for lack of physical violence against Claudius. The words "to the ground, as if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder," present a motif which immediately reminds the reader of Claudius' remark that his ". . . offense is rank, it smells to Heaven./It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,/A brother's murder." (III. iii. 36-38)

Hamlet's next comment that the skull "might be the pate of a politician" suggests that he is thinking of his encounters with Polonius. When Polonius is plotting with Gertrude to have Hamlet meet Ophelia while they spy upon the encounter, Hamlet enters; Polonius engages him in an exchange (as everyone knows) by forcing questions upon him. Answering Polonius while wearing his "antic disposition," Hamlet shows his feelings toward Polonius by answering and punning: "Words, words, words." (II. ii. 194) His response to Polonius as to whether he will walk "out of the air" (II. ii. 208) is that he will walk out of the air "Into. . . [his] grave." (II. ii. 210) Furthermore, Polonius has tried to "circumvent God" by failing to show allegiance to King Hamlet and shifting that loyalty to Claudius—a move which to Prince Hamlet would be the circumvention of God's representative, the true King, Hamlet's father.

Still viewing the bones, Hamlet says to Horatio that the skull might be that "of a courtier which could say, 'Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?'" Hamlet could have been thinking of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, whose character, as Hamlet later discovered, was deftly limned in the frame which Shakespeare used, transposing a single word—the name of each.

King. Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

Queen. Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz. (II. ii. 33-34)

Hamlet's earlier confession to his imagined friends that life "goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth seems to me a sterile promontory" (II. ii. 308-10) puts his melancholia into its most elemental

context, at the same time reducing it in tone and imagery to the smallness of a grave.

Continuing to watch the diggers, Hamlet asks Horatio, "Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with 'em? Mine ache to think on 't." (V. i. 99-100) The word *mine* in the lines quoted identifies the psychological projection of Hamlet into the grave; he sees *himself* as having been "dead" for some time, not just as a living man who is observing *another* dead human being.

While mortality looms before each of us, in the character of Hamlet it is a matter of intensity of degree. The other parallel quoted in which Hamlet sees himself used as part of a game of loggats is too obvious to require comment. Throughout the play, Hamlet's chiaroscuro of life, death, and death-in-life is pervasive.

Discussing yet another skull, he questions why a former lawyer would suffer "this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery?" (V. i. 109-11) The distinctions between being and notbeing—between life and death—are blurred throughout the dialogue in the gravediggers' scene. Hamlet's feelings here directly parallel his expression in his best-known soliloquy:

To be or not to be—that is the question.
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
 And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—. . . (III. i. 56-60)

Before the break at the end of line sixty, just cited, Shakespeare, through Hamlet, gives us an incomparable, literal statement of the juxtaposition of death and its life-equivalent, sleep; and the playwright has Hamlet continue the soliloquy with metaphysical speculation about dreams of death. But why has Hamlet allowed himself to be "knocked about the sconce with a dirty shovel?" Why has he suffered the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune?" These conditions are precisely the result of his "not being," of his "death."

Commenting further about the lawyer's skull in the quibble on the word *fine* with its various meanings of "the end," "admirable," and "uncoarse," Hamlet equates himself—melancholic, virtually dead—with the "fine pate full of fine dirt." It is as though he would really say, here's *another* "fine pate full of fine dirt" besides my own, and "must the inheritor [Hamlet] himself have no more, ha?" (V. i. 120-1)

In yet another soliloquy Hamlet berates himself over and again: "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" (II. ii. 577) He thinks of himself in that soliloquy in the very way he sees the diggers now.

In an unusual and subtle exponential tack, the imagery of the

gravediggers' scene is tied to both the first soliloquy of the play and to Claudius' soliloquy before he tries to pray. Shakespeare has Hamlet ask Horatio a quite logical question:

Haml. Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?
Hor. E'en so.
Haml. And smelt so? Pah!
Hor. E'en so, my lord.
Haml. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! (V. i. 218-23)

Alexander the Great and Hamlet are surely paralleled here. But the recurrence of the word *uses* reminds one of the death-like imagery of the first soliloquy:

. . . . God! God!
 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
 Fie on 't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden
 That grows to seed, things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. (I. ii. 132-7)

The idea of baseness is indicated here also, although the word itself is not used. Further exponential imagery occurs when Hamlet asks Horatio specifically about the smell which the skeleton of Alexander the Great might have had. The lines just cited contain the words *stale* and *rank*, obviously related to the sense of smell. Claudius' soliloquy, earlier referred to, contains the words *rank* and *smells*.

The allusion in the first soliloquy of growing "to seed" has ambiguous meanings, referring to Hamlet's mother, to his world-view at that early point of the play, and describing his apparent death before his regeneration in the last act of the play. The poetic imagery, "things rank and gross in nature," is beautifully contrapuntal to the play on the word *fine*, already discussed.

In his famous monologue about Yorick, the Prince remembers Yorick as a "fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy" who is now quite "chopfallen." Hamlet is describing his own previous condition, which was quite different from his now "chopfallen" state. He extends the contrast of his own former self with his present self when he asks Yorick:

. . . Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs?
 Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a
 roar? . . . Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her
 paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come—make her laugh
 at that. (V. i. 208-10; 212-14)

The consistency of Hamlet's advice to Yorick's skull with what Hamlet himself (who is still riding upon Yorick's back) had already done, is

intensified by the Prince's insistence that Yorick also visit Queen Gertrude's chambers to mock and to frighten her.

To conclude the analogy of melancholia—the paralyzing disease of death-in-life—with death itself, Shakespeare brings into physical juxtaposition the “dead” Hamlet with the dead Ophelia; this is the Hamlet who, speaking to Laertes, says that he is “not splenitive or rash,” but has in him “something that is dangerous” which Laertes should fear.

It has been necessary for Hamlet to identify explicitly with death in order to experience rebirth and reaffirmation. “Of Shakespeare's tragic heroes,” A.H. Fairchild noted some years ago, that “all of them display an egoism and self-pity, an aversion to fact and truth, and a homicidal or suicidal mania.”²

In the overall Christian framework of the play *Hamlet*, one sees Hamlet trying to “circumvent God,” just as he has accused the “might-be Politician” in the grave of doing. He begins to escape the clutches of “death” only when his reflexive capability causes him to say to Horatio:

. . . And that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Roughhew them how we will. (V. ii. 9-11)

Later, in the same regenerated mood, Hamlet's defiance of augury evinces his often-quoted statement: “The readiness is all.” (V. ii. 233-34)

Prince Hamlet became heroic when he transcended death. Before this transcendence, he literally descended into the grave; then he arose unafraid to face actual death. It is a reduction to absurdity to try to see Hamlet's complex character in simplistic terms based upon fragmented evidence presented at different points throughout the play. That William Shakespeare was able to pull these multifarious facets of Hamlet's character together with seemingly casual ease and skill—in a scene which has not heretofore been discussed in any detail—attests once again to the subtle genius of the playwright.

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Notes

¹This quotation and all subsequent quotations from *Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Geo. B. Harrison (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1952).

²Roy W. Battenhouse, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Its Art and Its Christian Premises* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 226, citing *Shakespeare and the Tragic Theme* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1944), pp. 105-17.



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