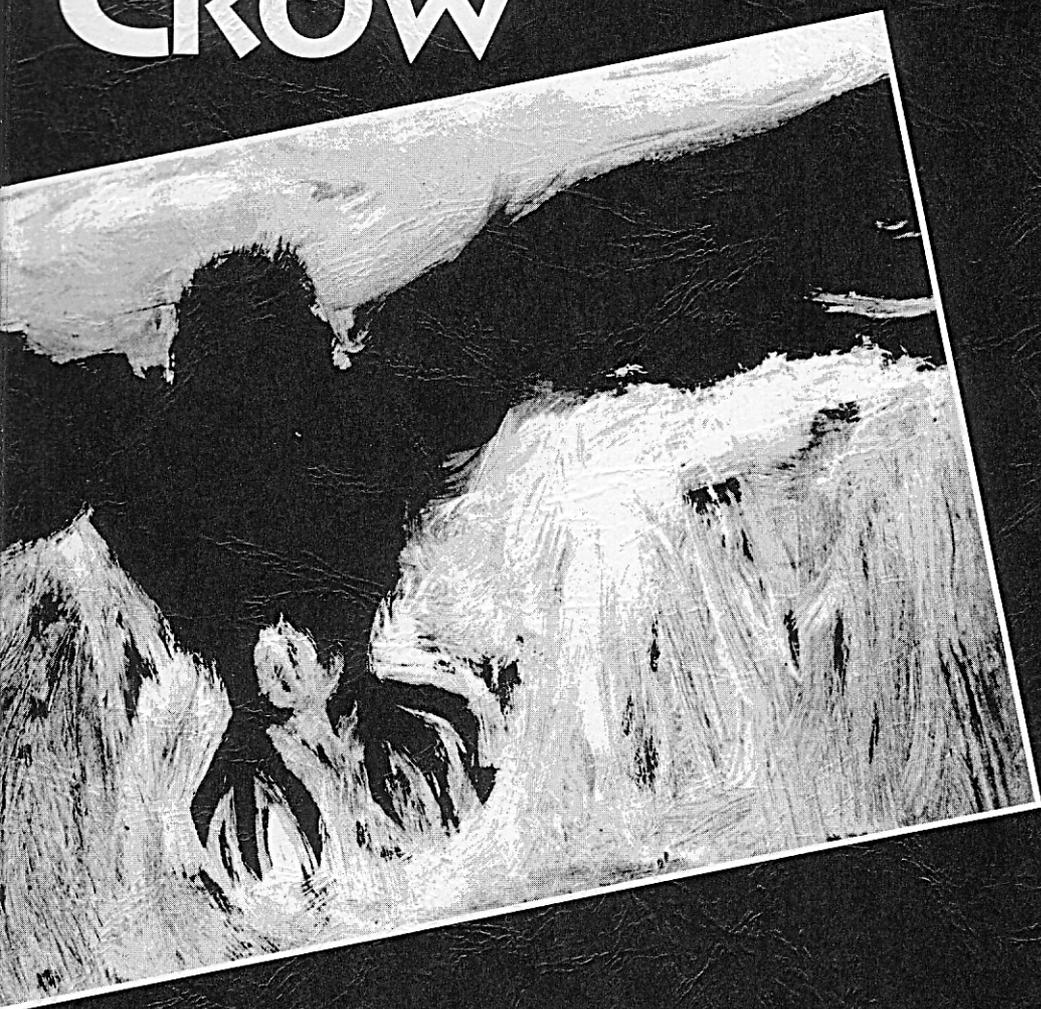


THE UPSTART CROW



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

— T. S. Eliot

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

— Walter Pater

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

— Paul Valery

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From the Editor

Readers will immediately notice conspicuous changes in *The Upstart Crow's* format. In its thirteenth issue the journal has retired its familiar quill-clenching crow for a more animated rendering of our venerable bird. Now is the time to thank both Ron Gifford, the young Tennessee artist who designed the familiar cover which carried the *Crow* through its first dozen issues, and Tom Parker, the celebrated Missouri artist who has painted us a new crow lifting off in flight for at least the next dozen issues. Readers will also notice changes in format on the inside of the journal, namely some new headers designed by Clemson University's document design lab staff under the direction of our production editor, Tharon Howard.

This issue inaugurates a special new feature of *The Upstart Crow* as well—the publication of a regular lecture or two delivered at the annual Clemson Shakespeare Festival. The first three festivals included lectures by some of our most celebrated colleagues, Lynda Boose, Ralph Cohen, Herb Coursen, Carol Neely, Annabel Patterson, Jeanne Roberts, and Steven Urkowitz. In this and future issues, we will be publishing selected lectures from the festival beginning with Charles Frey's "The Bias of Nature."

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PRAYER
by H. R. Coursen

Crow
on top of the tree,
precursor of December snow
and of the darkest days that are to be,
hold off the wind that teaches bone to know
the merest grip of what we are, close-in mortality,
the eye bereft of light and lustre, death-wax in the marrow,
hold off the voicing of your purposed shadow, hold, so that we
here below
may solve the yearly mystery.

International Globe Theatre

The Bias of Nature

by Charles H. Frey

In *King Lear*, the Earl of Gloucester complains that Lear, in rejecting Lear's own daughter, Cordelia, "falls from bias of nature." Interpreters take "bias of nature" to mean "natural inclination." The metaphor comes from bowling: in Shakespeare's day, a bowling ball was weighted on one side to make it curve. The bias includes both the weight and the tendency of such a ball to curve, and the term "bias" came to stand for preference or prejudice. In *Lear*, the "bias of nature" suggests the inclination a father might have to help his daughter or to treasure his youngest daughter particularly.

In *Twelfth Night*, the heroine, Viola, disguises herself as a male named Cesario to work for Count Orsino. Orsino sends Cesario to woo Lady Olivia for him, and Olivia, mistaking Cesario for a true man, falls violently in love. Luckily perhaps, Viola/Cesario has a twin brother, Sebastian, said to be identical. When he appears alone before Olivia (who knows nothing of the twinship), she, thinking him to be Cesario, asks him to marry her. He agrees. They marry. Near the end of the play, Olivia discovers her two mistakes (that Cesario was a woman and that Olivia married Sebastian instead of Cesario). Sebastian says to her:

So comes it, lady, you have been mistook;
 But Nature to her bias drew in that
 You would have been contracted to a maid,
 Nor are you therein, by my life, deceiv'd,
 You are betroth'd both to a maid and man.

(V. i. 259-63)

Does Sebastian mean: "In loving Cesario, you mistook a woman for a man, but your nature is biased to prefer a man"? Or: "You have been taken in marriage by me, the 'wrong' person, and thus 'mistook,' but your nature wanted a man, anyway"? Or: "You made a mistake and thought you were falling in love with a man when you were really falling in love with a woman, but, in explanation of this fact, it is only natural for you as a woman to draw toward another woman"?

We could argue that Shakespeare probably thought the bias of nature to favor a cross-sexual love. In Sonnet 20, Dame Nature begins to create a woman but makes her so beautiful that nature herself begins to fall in love; nature then adds male organs of generation to her beloved. In Shakespeare's narrative poem, *Venus and Adonis*, nature, similarly, makes a male, Adonis, her master-

piece of such all-encompassing life and beauty that the world would end with his death. These two images, however, are suspect as arguments for biasing dame nature toward a strictly male ideal since both men appear distinctly bi-gendered (if not bi-sexed or bisexual): the young man of the sonnets is a master-mistress who retains a woman's face and heart; Adonis is said to be fairer than Venus and "more lovely than a man" (9). Viola, of course, captures the love both of a man and a woman, and her brother Sebastian is loved by both a man, the sea captain, Antonio, and a woman, Olivia. He proclaims himself, in the passage quoted, to be both "maid and man" or, if the text is pronounced colloquially, "a maid 'n man."

In our modern way of thinking, no one can be both a maid and man in that we say each cell of each human body can be determined to contain either an x-x twenty-third chromosome or an x-y twenty-third chromosome. That's a bias of nature with a vengeance. In Shakespeare's way of thinking, a virginal young man, while recognizably male in body and clothing, may also seem maid-like in attributes we would ascribe to secondary sex characteristics and to traditionally "feminine" behavior. The young man's expression of maid-like emotions we might link to socially-created gender, not physical sex. It's not at all clear, though, that Shakespeare, if introduced to our distinctions, would have recognized or liked them. His bias of nature sounds like something inborn, inherent, in our terms "genetic," and yet, characteristically, Shakespeare allies it to a kind of sexual orientation, within and without, that seems ambivalent.

There's a possibility that Shakespeare's reference in *Twelfth Night* to the "bias of nature" contains hints of a pun on "bi-ass." Shakespeare pretty clearly puns on "ass" a-s-s and "as" a-s in *Henry V* when he makes Fluellen say: "By Chesu, he is an ass, as in the world; I will verify as such in his beard" (or perhaps in his "bared"). Only a few lines later, Gower observes of Fluellen and Macmorris, "Gentlemen, both, you will mistake each other," meaning sexually mis-take. Like almost everything else in Shakespeare's sexual vocabulary, it seems, the ass tends to be punnable, indeterminate, big-gendered, bi-form, bi-assed. A possibly gender-bending Mercutio praises Romeo for finally consenting to pun bawdily: "Now art thou sociable, now art thou Romeo; now art thou what thou art, by art as well as by nature, for this driveling love is like a great natural that runs lolling up and down to hide his bable in a hole." The "natural" as instinctual fool may express nature's double bias in turning toward "a" hole, any hole of indeterminate location or gender. Drawing to a bias, nature may double her preferences. When Shakespeare bowled, he knew that the bowling

pin reached by the ball's bias was called both the "Jack" and the "mistress." In *Hamlet*, the word-spinning counselor, Polonius, after imagining his son Laertes entering a brothel, speaks of finding out his son's sexual behavior or proclivities "with windlasses [or wind-lasses] and with essays of bias." Polonius goes on to counsel Reynaldo to spy on Laertes and to "observe his inclination in yourself." The "bias" of nature, then, could hint at a bi-fold (cf. *Tro.* V. ii. 144) appeal and love in men and women. Nature to her bias drew, in this view, by causing Olivia, not to mention Orsino, to love a man/woman, a master mistress.

Would Shakespeare be likely to think of nature in such an ambiguous way? Well, Shakespeare has no extended description of the goddess, Dame Nature. Shakespeare's contemporary, Edmund Spenser, does describe Dame Nature as ambiguous in inner status (*The Faerie Queene*, VII. vii. v. 5-7), for truly:

. . . by her face and physnomy,
Whether she man or woman inly were,
That could not any creature well descry.

Another contemporary, Francis Bacon, says: "the body of nature is justly described bi-form."

In Shakespeare, though nature, when personified, is female, is "Dame" Nature, as such she not only plays with or softens the pressure of differences in sex, but she also often joins like things to each other: each kind of nature brings forth or produces its same kind (*Tmp.* II. i. 163-64), and "native things" are made by nature to kiss each other (*AWW*, I. i. 222-23).

Such accounts may help us see why Shakespeare, as a writer of the Renaissance, can so easily describe the love of woman for woman as natural and agreeable in many senses. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Helena describes her relation with Hermia in these terms:

So we grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition,
Two lovely berries moulded on one stem.
(III. ii. 203-11)

And in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the heroine, Emilia, in a passage penned by Shakespeare, describes her perfect love for Flavina. Emilia concludes:

. . . the true love 'tween maid and maid may be
More than in sex diuidual.
(I. iii. 81-82)

In Shakespeare's comedies, we see pairs or groups of women providing each other support and, sometimes, love. From Adriana and Luciana in *The Comedy of Errors* through the women of France in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Portia and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, Mistress Ford and Mistress Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Beatrice and Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, Helena and Diana in *All's Well that Ends Well*, Isabella and Mariana in *Measure for Measure*, to Hermione and Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*, we see women working together as friends or making common cause together. Sometimes, the friendship or love between the comic women seems warmer, more trusting, and happier than any relation between woman and man in the given play. Think of the merry wives, for example, together repelling not only the lustful assaults of Falstaff but correcting injustices of their husbands. Often there is a home or central place, identified with the women friends (such as Portia and Nerissa, the merry wives, Rosalind and Celia, or Hermione and Paulina) which proves a center of sanity and repair, where the faults and failures of men can be laughed out of countenance. Even in some of Shakespeare's histories and tragedies, we find women leagued in amity, directly or indirectly, against invasive males (as Anne, Margaret, the Duchess, and Elizabeth in *Richard III*, or Katherine and Alice in *Henry V*, or Katherine and Patience in *Henry VIII*, or Emilia and Desdemona in *Othello*, or Cleopatra and her attendants Iras and Charmian).

Considering these examples, we might conclude that the bias of generative nature in Shakespeare draws women toward men and men toward women but that the bias of affectionate nature, or love among friends, more often works within one gender. This all makes sense in terms of traditional and perhaps conservative value systems linking cross-gendered attachments with sex, time, procreation, and death and notioning same-gendered attachments as nonsexual and spiritually refined. The two sexes mean death to each other personally though they are the means to extended life through progeny. Olivia's bias of nature may be conceived, then, in this double way as inclining toward Viola/Cesario both as a man and as a woman, both to make time and to break time.

If Olivia's natural bias were merely toward a person of physically opposed sex, a man, then it would be hard to see how the bias would draw her to Cesario. Olivia could only successfully "love" Cesario as "he" displays male traits in gender, not a man's traits in sex. This fact of character gives the possibly double bias of nature in Olivia a strangely chaste quality, somewhat like the "married chastity" of Shakespeare's phoenix and turtledove as they participate in "Single nature's double name." If Olivia's bias of nature

were simply what drew her to substitute Sebastian for Viola, however, then the bias could express an inclination toward the opposite physical sex. Yet again, Sebastian stresses his own maidenlike modesty and inexperience.

It is typical of Shakespeare to create a sort of steamy, or is it foggy, ambivalence among elements of gender and sex in accounting for love bias. In our age, we may need to recall that love which thrives on sameness as much as on difference seems to have been admired in Shakespeare's day. To assign mannish or boyish characteristics to women might then enhance rather than degrade their attractiveness to men, and this observation applies not merely to dramatic characters (such as Viola, Rosalind, the two Portias, Julia, Cleopatra, Imogen, and the like) but also to poetic characters of the dark lady, Venus, and silvery chaste Lucrece, all given partly mannish or boyish traits. From this primarily male point of view, boyish traits in a woman may make her seem more nearly timeless, may make her generativity less death-connected.

As opposed to a gender-inclusive beloved, who may be loved spiritually and timelessly, the beloved defined mainly by sexual passion often proves threatening in Shakespeare. Shakespeare's infamous sex-nausea is illustrated, among other places, in Sonnet 129 ("Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame"), Hamlet's nun-nery speech, Lear's diatribe on the sulphurous pit, and Timon's and Leontes' fulminations against women. There Shakespeare pens primarily a male revulsion against perceived threats from women of castration, cuckoldry, disease, and sin. Often the fear is expressed by a male (such as Othello, Lear, or Antony) who feels frustrated and betrayed by a woman or women in the moment, but the feared triumph of mortal lust over immortal love may extend beyond male heterosexual complaint.

In Shakespeare, fear and distaste of sex attach not only to women's sexuality seen from a male point of view but also to sexual activities among males. Here the threat of sex may again, ultimately, be death: not death through generational supplanting but death through loss of sexual power and male identity. There are far more Shakespearean references to sex acts among males than have been recognized even by compilers of bawdy dictionaries such as Partridge and Colman. Many such references are slighting, scornful, negative, mocking. Puns join sodomy and beastliness; fighting and warfare are imaged through jokes on buggery and rape; ambiguous gender identifications and bisexuality are sometimes tied to impotence, castration, and alleged sub-humanity. Overall, such harsh, dismissive bawdy may seem to outweigh Shakespeare's more humane portrayals of love between males (as possibly in some *Sonnets*, *The Merchant of Venice*,

As You Like It, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*). For such a view, compilers of male sex bawdry such as Ellis and Rubinstein cite not only Patroclus and Achilles but also Andrew in *Twelfth Night*, Arthur in *King John*, Armado in *Love's Labor's Lost*, Richard the Second, Richard the Third, Leontes and Polixenes, Justice Shallow and Davy, Parolles and Bertram, Adonis, and perhaps Valentine and Proteus, Suffolk (in *2 Henry IV*), Aufidius, Iago, Lavatch, Slender, Timon, Trinculo, and others. Images of threatened sodomy flicker not only through fight scenes—as in *Romeo and Juliet*, *King John*, and *Henry V*—but also in calmer quarters—as when Armado speaks of his Grace's royal finger dallying with the Spaniard's excrement (*LLL*, V. i. 104) or when Poinc tells Hal, "Go to, I stand the push of your one thing that you tell" (*2 Henry IV*, II. ii. 37) or when Mistress Quickly affirms that Falstaff in fornicating will spare neither man, woman, nor child (*2 Henry IV*, II. i. 16). Such examples can be multiplied though few glosses touch them.

The love of Olivia for Viola may qualify the more general distaste expressed elsewhere toward sexual love among men. Olivia may well intend an eventual sexual consummation with the object of her affection, who happens to be a woman. The bias of nature appears more sexual here (at least consciously) than in the case of Lear's bias of nature toward Cordelia. Olivia, a woman, may want to go to bed with someone whom we in the audience know is "really" a woman (in terms of the plot, at least). It's "all right," of course, because not only does Olivia think Viola to be a man, but an actual man, Sebastian, inhabits and overlays, as it were, the masculine attractiveness of Viola. It may also be "all right" for the reason or, more accurately, opinion, commonly held in our tradition, that the existence of sexual love between women poses less threat to men's conceptions of their manhood than does the existence of sexual love between men. To put it another way, we may think of male sex as necessarily expressing a power differential; female sex may not necessarily do so, we may think. Olivia's violent passion for Viola verges, however, on not quite being "all right," and surely that is part of its entertainment value.

Up to this point in the discussion, I have been treating Shakespeare's leading ladies as if they were just that, ladies, identifiably female and feminine in sex and gender. But I have been ignoring, until now, the fact that all women's roles in Shakespeare were originally played by men or, more accurately, boys, young men. There were no leading *ladies* in first Shakespeare, only leading *laddies*. Thus, when Orlando wooed what he thought was a boy impersonating Rosalind, an older male actor actually addressed a boy. That was one level of reality in the playhouse. When Olivia wooed Viola, two boys addressed each other. The

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question thus arises whether our earlier notion of traditionally gendered relations between Shakespeare's men and women characters is vitally compromised by the ubiquitous presence of boy actors playing female roles?

Now, we may say that theater, being a highly artificial medium, filled with conventions of all kinds, can easily accommodate transvestite acting into its depictions of "reality." Indeed, many great ages of theater, so far in history, have been transvestite in nature—for example, Greek and Roman theaters, Japanese Noh theater, Chinese Peking opera, and the English Renaissance stage. In this view, audience members quickly "forget" that boys are playing women's parts. A second and ultimately more persuasive view links the pleasure of performance to audience awareness of the cross-dressing and awareness of instabilities in portrayals of gender.

Theater and film, if not the arts generally, thrive on gender bending and blending, often expressed through cross-dressing: think of *Some Like It Hot*, *Tootsie*, *Victor/Victoria*, *The Crying Game*, *Mrs. Doubtfire*, and *Orlando*, or Boy George, Madonna, and Michael Jackson. Do actors and audiences like to unmoor themselves from constrictive sexual identities and gender roles, at least in fantasy? Whatever the reason for audience interest, the fact of cross-dressing and gender-blending in such entertainment is very much a conscious part of its appeal. Shakespeare audiences are asked, in a similar fashion, to notice and respond to the cross-dressing of the Page in the Induction to *The Taming of the Shrew*, the cross-dressing of Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the cross-dressing of the craftsmen who put on the play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the cross-dressing of Jessica, Portia, and Nerissa in *The Merchant of Venice*, the cross-dressing of Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the cross-dressing of Rosalind and Celia in *As You Like It*, the cross-dressing of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, the cross-dressing of the actors in the play within the play of *Hamlet*, and the cross-dressing of Imogen in *Cymbeline*.

It would seem a strange split of attention in early audiences to notice all that cross-dressing within the plots and forget the cross-dressing of boy actors playing "women's" parts. At the close of *As You Like It*, moreover, Rosalind, now attired as her womanly self but played originally by a boy actor, speaks an Epilogue directly to the mixed audience in which she/he says, "If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me." Here, the boy actor draws attention to his cross-dressing, just as Cleopatra does in speculating how a future actor will "boy" her part or just as the cross-dressed Page in the *Shrew* Induction does in specifi-

cally “usurping” the “grace, / Voice, gait, and action of a gentlewoman.”

At varying times during Shakespeare’s career, the fact that leading ladies were boys no doubt meant many things to many persons. Opponents of the stage responded with moral outrage to their fear that boy actors would foster vice (though they feared, perhaps even more strongly, that female actors would do the same). Cross-dressing of any kind could be attacked as blurring “natural” divisions of sex or defended as exposing the artificiality of sex roles. To note such moral evaluation may help us less here, however, than it may to compare responses of men and women to cross-dressed leading ladies in Shakespeare’s era and in our own. I have already noted the significance of Olivia’s bias drawing her to lovers who, partly by means of cross-dressing, are made to seem inclusively male and female, and I suggested a fascination in Shakespeare, if not also in his culture at large, with male adolescent beauty as appealing to all persons and as all-inclusive and perfect. What might such response, in particular, mean for the casting, playing, and reception of Shakespeare’s women’s roles (then and now)?

Luckily, no one can reasonably reduce the appeal of male or female adolescence, or of boy or girl actors, to a single quality. All-boy choirs and acting companies were popular in England for many decades. The all-boy theater troupes, of course, played male as well as female roles; they may have been appreciated by men and women alike for the depth of their training, the clarity and range of their voices, the sophistication and polish of their bearing and movement. We might examine Shakespeare’s boys and youth to glean, if possible, a composite portrait of salient traits he identified with boyhood. We could compare a speech of Rosalind as Ganymede in *As You Like It* to one of Leontes in *The Winter’s Tale*. Rosalind (III. iii. 410-24) imagines herself a “moonish youth” who acted the part of a young woman and so “cured” the woman’s male lover of his love; this boy actor would, she says:

grieve, be effeminate, changeable, longing and liking, proud, fantastical, apish, shallow, inconstant, full of tears, full of smiles; for every passion something, and for no passion truly any thing, as boys and women are for the most part cattle of this color; would now like him, now loathe him, then entertain him, then forswear him, now weep for him, then spit at him; that I drave my suitor from his mad humor of love to a living humor of madness, which was, to forswear the full stream of the world, and to live in a nook merely monastic. And thus I cur’d him, and this way will I take upon me to wash

your liver as clean as a sound sheep's heart, that there shall not be one spot of love in't.

In this satirical and sexist view, a boy actor is one who can so keenly display the faults of women as to show why they should not be loved. The boy actor reveals the folly of heterosexuality. Here male and female audience members might or might not differ in responses, and the reasons and justifications for differing response would be difficult to tease out.

A related Shakespearean view of boyhood is that of Leontes and his friend Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale* (I. ii. 155-71). The two men look back on their boyhood as a pre-sexual time when their natures were tender; they were unbreeched with phallic daggers muzzled and undangerous; they were vegetative kernels, squashes; their childness cured all blood-thickening thoughts.

This image of boyhood verging on sexuality but not yet shaped toward possibly hurtful male desire seems a key feature of the Shakespearean boy actor and a challenge to a Shakespearean leading lady. Shakespeare imagines that women and men alike must be charmed by the maiden man or master mistress, the "lovely boy" who holds Time's fickle hourglass in his power because he embodies, at least for a moment, both a double sexuality and a chaste inexperience or timeless poise forever on the brink of committed generation.

More lovely than a man and yet not a woman, this figure tempts us to call it androgyne, and many pages have been written arguing that an androgynous, masculine/feminine combination of gendered attributes is the Shakespearean ideal. I would respond that Shakespeare has many conflicting ideals. For some purposes, androgynous figures may seem ideally presexual, asexual, or metasexual. That the lovely boy may be so creates no final argument, however, against two sexes or two genders. Venus may admire but cannot be Adonis; both are satirized, yet both are also ideals. Though Adonis shuns Venus, he stimulates her sexual desire. In the later Sonnets, neither the heaven nor hell of heterosex is to be confidently canceled. Beatrice and Benedick will help people the world partly through the delicious energy of their clashing roles that express sexual tension and passion; it would hardly help their play to have them unisexually alike. Can the strength Lear uses to kill the killer of his daughter be shorn of masculinity? Can the ideality as well as ignominy of Antony and of Cleopatra be separated from their strongly defined gender roles? When Leontes refuses child-bed privileges to his wife, Hermione, and hales her into court before she has regained her post-partum strength, we don't want him to treat Hermione as

someone without sex- or gender-driven needs. For women's sake as well as men's, gender should remain more complex than promotion of even positive androgyny tends to allow.

The attempt to portray, poetically or theatrically, a gender-inclusive or symmetrical ideal may run the risk, furthermore, of falsely suggesting that society values and empowers each gender equally. The maiden man may be vastly privileged, however, over the manly maid. As long as gender distinctions line up with power differentials, androgynous ideals must remain suspect as possibly masking inequalities.

Whatever we may think of possible androgynous ideals in Shakespeare, furthermore, we might concede that his characters' parts are today generally played by actors willing to represent distinctly gendered societies on stage. Conservative casting matches the actor's traditionally defined gender, race, ethnicity, age, pronunciation style, body type, and so on to similarly perceived definitions of each character in the plays. Thus, women in our theaters usually play women's roles, and men play men's roles. We already know, however, that Shakespeare in some important sense conceived of women's roles as played by boys. If actresses play these roles, should they think of themselves as imitating boys who are pretending to be women? A relatively conservative if also ambiguous answer to this intriguing question might be: "No, a Shakespearean leading lady need not seek literally to imitate a boy playing the female character, but the Shakespearean actress may do well to consider possible limitations in the range of passion, maturity, and sensual expression which Shakespeare may have written into the part as conceived for a boy actor."

More radical argument might implore actresses to reject Shakespearean roles on the ground that such roles amount only to impersonation of what were originally boy actor drag queens, male transvestites (working, it could be added, for pennies in patriarchal productions). To me such argument seems dismissive of the boy actors' skills as well as unprofitably separatist, but I can empathize with frustrations that might ignite the argument.

A very different but equally radical theory of Shakespearean casting might call for all actors to be eligible for any given part without regard to each actor's age, sexual orientation, gender identification, skin color, ethnicity, voice style, body style, facial features, handicaps, and so on. Such attempted exposure of constructedness of social categories would be challenging for most audiences, but many productions of Shakespeare are moving in that direction. Increasingly, we see race- and gender-blind cast-

ing. Is there any point at which the suitability of a given actress for a part may be challenged or applauded on grounds of basic logic or of natural bias?

An example of widely accepted gender-switching or cross-casting is the playing of Ariel's part by an actress (somewhat like the playing of Peter Pan by actresses). Sometimes the Fool and Cordelia in *King Lear* are played by the same actress. Such parts we probably recognize as specially androgynous. Does our culture tend to see women as more androgynous than men? Or do we merely accept the convention of trained actresses in their twenties or thirties or forties playing such parts as preferable to the relatively untrained boy actors available in most casting environments? Neither Ariel nor Lear's Fool need be young, but the Fool's lines suggesting his sexuality might fit his part better to an older male actor. Employment of actresses for such parts and for roles of fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and of supernumeraries in other plays may reflect our desire to provide more equal working opportunities for men and women. Our culture may be, in addition, considerably more homophobic than was Shakespeare's culture, so that many seem unready to explore a full range of love scenes between actors of the same sex. Imagine two women as Romeo and Juliet, or two men, and you may begin to explore your own bias.

There are other variations in gender positioning of actors. To mention just two, you can readily imagine how much it might affect some audiences' response to cast, say, the part of Viola to a traditionally super-feminine actress—buxom, curvaceous, long-haired, high-voiced, blonde, blue-eyed, and delicate of feature, hand, and motion—or to cast the part of, say, Cleopatra to a relatively "masculine" woman—square-shouldered, with highly articulated muscles, crew cut, deep voice, big hands and feet, and heavy movements. Men, of course, may also be cast and played through a similar range. Without necessarily going to extremes, Shakespeare productions play constantly with such variables, and, so doing, they radically shape positive and negative responses in various portions of their audiences.

I want to close by suggesting a few implications these observations may have for teaching and studying Shakespeare in high schools and colleges. Shakespeare first entered our educational systems as an adjunct to teaching rhetoric and oratory, and Shakespeare has been used by educationists ever since to teach rhetorical ideals, elocutionary ideals, moral ideals, political ideals, imperialist ideals, democratic ideals, leftist ideals, feminist ideals, and so on. Because literature and drama participate so vividly in the social currents and struggles of each age, it would be a wonder

if Shakespeare could ever be taught so as not to foster or undermine a broad range of social attitudes and opinions.

To avoid controversy, some teachers and students restrict their focus to formal, aesthetic, or other allegedly more objective concerns, and, periodically, after decades of overly politicized teaching, such recyclings to less overtly political study (study, say, of vocabulary, meter, image patterns, play construction, sources, theater history, and the like) may take a useful place in the broad tides of Shakespeare teaching. We happen right now to be in the midst of a teaching era highly charged with social and political issues, but, even if we were not in the midst of such an era, our interest in gender and genre in Shakespeare should still be substantial. One can hardly read *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It* or *The Merchant of Venice* without noticing that the heroine cross-dresses to accomplish her purpose. It will no longer do for today's teachers to tell students, as past teachers often did, "Oh, Shakespeare just seized an opportunity to let the boy actor put on male attire so as to be more comfortable. Now, let's go on to other things." There's just too much interest all through Shakespeare in the maiden man, the master mistress, the lovely womanly boy, the manly woman, and the woman's part versus the man's part, to allow any other conclusion than that the cross-dressed heroine signals an interest in the instability of roles and power conventionally divided between male and female.

When we dig even a little into such plays, we note how any gendered bias of natural desire is rendered ambivalent when facing the gender-inclusive identities of Portia, Rosalind, Viola, and others. We note also the capacities of men or women in the plays to love both men and women. Shakespeare's mysterious bias of nature can pique student interest in the instability of gender roles and affections made so prominent in the plays. Many students are adolescents who, arguably, find themselves trying to sort out the extent to which sexual orientation, gender roles, and the like are naturally given or conventionally assigned. I hope you may agree, moreover, that many students experience through formal and informal education a broadening tolerance for the extent to which "nature" is shaped by nurture (or art or culture) so as to evaluate gender roles. Shakespeare's comedies, for instance, sort men and women out at the end into apparently traditional and unequal roles, but the central energy of the comedies may also reveal how artificial many of those roles must be. Students, in my experience, often see deeply into issues raised by this tension between traditional inequality and innovative equality.

In the most practical terms, I would urge teachers and students of Shakespeare not to avoid discussing or performing scenes,

among others, that illustrate ambiguities in the bias of nature. Yes, one finds resistance among some students to imagining, much less performing, varied gender roles. The battle of the sexes now, as ever, promotes much pseudo-knowledge and false confidence in defining the alleged "parts" of traditionally opposed genders. If young men, for example, at first seem unwilling to play female characters, once they see young women playing male characters, they often relent with surprising alacrity and take on the task of imitating first the voice and manner of women's caricatures but later the less gender-distinct behaviors given by Shakespeare to some women's parts.

Many persons like to see gender blending and bending, as we have said, in films and on stage, and they also like, if given the chance in a safe environment, to explore such blending and bending more personally. My student acting groups, for instance, regularly employ gender-blind casting and move from semi-parody and caricature to often movingly sincere exploration of the "other." Last year, a student who was a linebacker in professional football played the part of Isabella in the final scene of *Measure for Measure* and never once broke character. The class audience laughed at first but soon concentrated on his fine understanding and display of Isabella's situation and feelings. I have witnessed equally affecting Hamlets and Lears played by male and female students. My point, however, is not merely to applaud cross-dressed performance but to show students that gender-dressing concerns only one factor relevant to acting portrayal and audience apprehension, whereas other factors, such as voice production, enunciation, musicality, eye contact, grace, charisma, and demonstrated understanding of a part, all prove, often, relatively gender-free but important in establishing final effects of a part.

Finally, even when students do not explore through their acting the complex and fascinating bias of nature in Shakespeare, they can still explore it through reading and can reach some of the same registers of experience. If you will look at the speech by Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, for example, you will see the word "maid" employed twice. The first "maid" refers to Viola; the second to Sebastian. At first, "maid" seems to be a word denoting sexual identity as female, but then its meaning shifts to that of "sexually inexperienced or innocent." An implication may be that male and female virgins are more more nearly same than different. Since their differing bodies have not been employed in love-making, the difference, while considerable, is largely potential, not yet a generative fact.

I think this passage, if understood to view a sexually innocent male as resembling a virgin maid, might prove rather shocking to

many students, some of whom may themselves be sexually innocent. Would you suppose that the demands of imagination made by the passage upon women students might differ significantly from the demands of imagination made upon men students? A man reading the passage and identifying with Sebastian is asked to imagine himself a maid. A woman reading the passage might first identify with Sebastian as a man and then, if possible, as a maid. Who has the easier task? Which part is easier? Why? What does use of one's imagination here produce in terms of feelings, thoughts, attitudes, evaluations? To ask such questions of student readers is merely to ask them for careful reading. It also leads deeply, however, into their own biases of nature, or nurture. It helps them live more sensitively the full life of body and mind.

Sebastian says, "Nor are you therein, by my life, deceiv'd." "By my life" suggests not only "as sure as I live" but also "by my faith," "by my troth, or truth," and in some contexts, "by my sensual life, my manhood, my womanhood, my sexual identity." (Diana, for instance, in *All's Well That Ends Well*, V. iii. 292-93, says, "Great King, I am no strumpet, by my life; / I am either maid, or else this old man's wife.") Sebastian's "life" includes here a double-bias in his sense of gender, one that can challenge and rouse a reader's empathic powers.

Teachers who encourage their students to read imaginatively enough so as to participate emotionally and viscerally in such implications of the Shakespeare text may usefully acknowledge both the universal, aesthetic, ideal Shakespeare constructed from centuries of tradition and also the historical, material, real Shakespeare that tosses in cross-currents of cultural change. And students who take courage to test their identities sufficiently to read in this close, physical, and heady way will learn much not only about the bias of nature, if there is one, but also about gender in Shakespeare as it appears in his leading ladies . . . and laddies.

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The Fairy Queen: Gloriana or Titania?

by Robert L. Reid

I.

"I would preferre divine Master Spencer, the miracle of wit, to bandie line for line for my life, in the honor of England, gainst Spaine, France, Italie, and all the worlde." So boasts Nashe of his fellow-alumnus of Cambridge as *The Faerie Queene* appears in manuscript. Chaucer and Spenser are "the Homer and Virgil of England"; Spenser is "heavenly," "immortal."¹ During 1590-96 Nashe's estimate is often repeated: Raleigh, Churchyard, Harvey, Peacham, Daniel, Covell, Fitzgeffrey, Harrington, Lodge canonize him among epic poets, stressing his learned "imitation of ancient speech"; Watson deifies him as "Apollo, whose sweet hunnie vaine / Amongst the Muses hath a chiefest place"; Edwards lauds his preeminence as England's literary flagbearer:

In his power all do flourish,
 We are shepherds but in vaine,
 There is but one tooke the charge,
 By his toile we do nourish,
 And by him are inlarg'd.
 He unlockt *Albions* glorie.²

In 1597-98, however, a mood of malcontented mockery is abroad, making Spenser seem prophetic in his preoccupation with fables of defamation in Legends 4-6 of *The Faerie Queene* (1596): Ate and Sclaunder in 4; Clarin, Malengin, Malfont, Envy, and Detraction in 5; Turpine, Despetto-Decetto-Defetto, Disdain, and the Blatant Beast in 6. Spenser ends by anticipating the beast's assault on his own art: "Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest, / Hope to escape his venemous despite" (*FQ*, VI. xii. 41).³

Within a year Bishop Hall in "Tooth-lesse Satyrs" (1597) records disdain for old-fashioned features of Spenserian epic:

. . . scoure the rusted swords of Elvish knights,
 Bathed in Pagan blood: or sheath them new
 In misty morral Types: or tell their fights,
 Who mighty Giants, or who Monsters slew.
 And by some strange enchanted speare and shield,
 Vanquisht their foe, and wan the doubtfull field.

In "Satire IV" Hall disavows any ridicule of the great poet: "But let no rebell Satyre dare traduce / Th' eternall Legends of thy Faery Muse, / Renowmed Spencer: whom no earthly wight / Dares once

to emulate, much lesse dares despight";⁴ but Hall's clever jab and feint suggest that irreverent satyrs are indeed abroad. In *Skialethia* (1598) Edward Guilpin gingerly mentions debate over Spenser's archaic language, "his grandam words."⁵ Brushing tact and caution aside, John Marston in *The Scourge of Villanie* (1598) applies the satiric thongs unreservedly to those who "invoke good Colin Clout," who feign allegorical depth through pretentious diction and seek authority by displacing ancient poets:

Here's one, to get an undeserv'd repute
Of deepe deepe learning, all in fustian sute
Of ill-plac'd farre-fetch'd words attiereth
His period, that sence forsweareth.
Another makes old Homer, Spencer cite.

When Marston belittles those claiming fairy-inspired visions, he cheapens the central trope of Spenser's Tudor mythography:

Another walks, is lazy, lies him down,
Thinks, reads, at length some wonted sleep doth crown
His new-fall'n lids, dreams; straight, ten pound to one
Out steps some fairy with quick motion,
And tells him wonders of some flow'ry vale;
Awakes, straight rubs his eyes, and prints his tale.⁶

Then an Irish revolt in the winter of 1598-99 ends Spenser's epic and his life, dispelling all satyrs. An outpouring of funereal praise from England's literati is summed up in Holland's epigram: "Once God of Poets, now Poet of the Gods."⁷

The cautious lampooning of Spenserian romance-epic in 1597-98, part of a *fin-de-sicèle* vogue for satire, suggests fading confidence in those exalted myths which Queen Elizabeth had gathered about herself, as Montrose argues in his New Historicist critique, "'Shaping Fantasies': Figurations of Gender and Power in Elizabethan Culture."⁸ Yet a more specific cause of temporary impiety toward Spenser's art can be found in the concurrence in 1595-96 of two major but antithetical literary events: one, the long-awaited publication of Books IV-VI of *The Faerie Queene* (registered January 20, 1596); the other, surely not anticipated, the opening performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁹

II.

Whether or not one agrees with Kermode that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is "Shakespeare's best comedy,"¹⁰ it is commonly deemed a definitive advance beyond the "apprentice comedies"

The Upstart Crow

(*The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labours Lost*). What caused this creative burst in 1595-96, engendering not only a more expansive comic mode, but also the deepening tragic vision of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II*? In the circumstances of literary history and in the text of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, no influence is more evident than the looming shadow of Spenser—supreme consolidator of the mythos of "Gloriana" and her "fairyland"—currently at fame's summit for his epic celebration of English culture and Elizabethan rule. The other notable precursor of Shakespeare's mingling of fairies, courtiers, and rustics is of course Lyly, his ethereal conceit of a semi-divine queen fostering earthly love while remaining steadfastly out of reach.¹¹ But Spenser's grandiose allegorical treatment of the "fairy queen" actualized the metaphor's fullest potential, elevating it to the status of an *imago Dei*. This fictive majesty could awaken Lyly's Endymion from narcissistic detachment to engage in heroic quests, and could provoke Shakespeare to parody Spenser's grand vision.

To some extent *A Midsummer Night's Dream* builds on central themes of the previous comedies. Again romantic desire contends with rival-love and self-love; again lovers become playthings of fantasy, unless they can control fantasy through conscious play-acting; again confusions of identity raise doubts about the cohesiveness of the self which loves and is beloved. What gives the comic exploration of love, fantasy, and selfhood far greater suggestiveness in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is, first, an expansion of ontological scope, the parallel development of four levels of aberrant human desire, from the boisterous vulgarity of rustics to the enchanting sublimity of aristocratic fairies, envisioning love's entanglements within a universal scale of being; and second, a corresponding expansion of metaphor and fiction into mythic proportions. This comically destabilized "Neoplatonic" mode (to which Shakespeare finally returns, on a grand scale and in a serious vein, in *The Tempest*) is, in part, a reaction to Spenser's Christian-Platonic purview of human love and identity, his expansive allegory championing a spiritual transcendence.¹² Indeed, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a manifesto of Shakespeare's anti-theatrical poetic art.¹³

What Shakespeare gleans from Spenser is not (as in Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*) merely a sequence of plagiarized passages,¹⁴ though Shakespeare includes that flattery as well, for as van Kranendonk and Hammerle observed long ago, and as the latest Arden editor confirms, Spenserian influence (especially from *The Shepherds Calendar*) is pervasive in the diction and imagery of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, far more than in any other Shakespearian play.¹⁵

Camille Paglia argues that, beginning as early as 1592-94, Shakespeare responds aggressively to Spenser's hieratic, learned, "Apollonian" mode of art—that in "Venus and Adonis" he revises a central Spenserian myth into a less iconographic, more earthy and playful mode of erotic psychological probing, and that in *Titus Andronicus* he farcically literalizes Spenser's allegory.¹⁶

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, the rejoinder to Spenser is far more direct and thoroughgoing. Shakespeare appropriates, and adapts to his own purposes, the supernatural and mythic expanse of Spenser's vision: the conception of England as an Edenic utopia, vitalized and blessed with semi-divine fairy spirits.¹⁷ He adopts, at least in part, Spenser's cosmic perspective on the human soul, the network of life-forms leading up to true Being. Above all he usurps the lodestone metaphor, the "fairy queen," which Spenser treats as a Christian-Platonic Form of forms: this "true glorious type," "Mirrour of grace and majestie divine" (*FQ*, I. iv), serves as touchstone of spiritual reality, endlessly revealed in epiphanic visions to each questing knight. Shakespeare appropriates this exalted conceit, then transforms it: not Gloriana, but Titania.

Here we must pause to note, in Oberon's mystic reminiscence of love's origin (*MND*, II. i. 148-68), Shakespeare's cautionary flattery of Queen Elizabeth as "a fair vestal, throned by the west," her beauty the cause of Cupid's shot, herself immune to such pricking desires: she is the Unmoved Mover of Love. The complex topical suggestiveness of this enchanting passage¹⁸ is highly unusual (one wishes to say, highly unShakespearean): it is Shakespeare's only direct and unsolicited flattery of Elizabeth during her lifetime;¹⁹ it augments the flattery by recalling the gala processions idolizing Elizabeth since the time of Leicester; and, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a whole, it adopts the Elizabethan idiom of grandiose myth-making and sublimating metaphor. All three characteristics show Shakespeare appropriating the Spenserian mode of poetry and royal flattery—not, however, as a means of affirming Spenser's vision, but as a means of transforming it to his own mode and idiom. Having with his lavish compliment diverted Elizabeth from identifying with the fairy queen (crucial to his strategy), Shakespeare can then proceed to the darkly joyous climax of his sublime burlesque, Titania's love-affair with the bestial English Everyman:

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms. . . .
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so

Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O how I love thee! How I dote on thee!

(IV. i. 39, 42-44)

Thus Shakespeare's fairy queen, quaintly burlesquing Elizabeth's declarations of marriage to her subjects,²⁰ consummates the unlikely match in crude but charming actuality. With what hilarity must the English audience of 1595-96 have reacted to Bottom's encounter with this alternate fairy queen, neatly upstaging Spenser's "dearest dread."²¹

The playful metamorphosis of Gloriana into Titania can hardly be claimed to have shifted the laurels from Spenser's learned allegory to Shakespeare's more broadly populist art. Nor is displacing Spenser the sole purpose of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which burlesques and celebrates the fantasies of English culture generally. But the occasional flouting of Spenserian epic during 1597-98²² must partly reflect the success of Shakespeare's satiric strategy in this comedy—his re-vision of the Fairy Queen, and his redefining of Poetry's substance, audience, and purpose.

III.

Shakespeare's burlesque unfolds subtly—at first sustaining, even heightening, the fairy queen's grandeur. Titania's attendant boasts of coursing through the entirety of elemental nature, and the opening lines of her chant actually replicate lines from the second installment of *The Faerie Queene* ("Through hils and dales, through bushes and through breres"—*FQ*, VI. viii. 32):²³

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over park, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire,
I do wander everywhere,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.
The cowslips tall her pensioners be,
In their gold coats spots you see;
Those be rubies, fairy favours,
In those freckles live their savours.
I must go seek some dew-drops here,
And hang a pearl in ev'ry cowslip's ear.

(II. i. 2-15)

This introduction to fairy spirits, long acknowledged as an allusion to *The Faerie Queene*,²⁴ at first seems to magnify Spenser's purpose, the idealization of Elizabeth and, through her dynamic

spirit, of England. The fairy queen's quasi-divine potency is heralded by her attendant's swiftness and freedom of movement (self-movement being the essential characteristic of spirit, both human and divine), and also by her benevolent influence on the natural order—gracing, beautifying, and energizing it. That the fairies "hang a pearl in ev'ry cowslip's ear" could allude to Elizabeth's courtly favorites affecting earrings of pearl, her favorite gem, symbolic of virgin purity. If so, it suggestively caps the sequence of sublimating imagery by which the natural world is refined or spiritualized through her influence: "dew" signifying the infusion of grace; "orbs," the perfecting of nature; "gold coats," the artful perfecting of human nature; "rubies," the "spotted" heart-passions giving "savors" to life; and "pearl," the purified soul.²⁵

Such, at least, are the more benevolent possibilities for associating Titania's prowess with Gloriana's. But one quickly anticipates the polar contrast between Shakespeare's fairy queen and that of his predecessor. Spenser's recondite Gloriana is associated with the transcendent reality of God, her beatific presence revealed in prophetic dream-visions to the heroically worthy, or mirrored in righteous earthly analogues (Una, Belphoebe, Britomart, Mercilla) whose veils and armor usually guard their moral purity and power. Gloriana's bodily presence is only demurely intimated in the vestigia of "pressed gras, where she had lyen" (FQ, I. xi. 15).²⁶

If Spenser moralizes Ovid (and baptizes Plato), Shakespeare reverses the perspective, envisioning the fairy spirits within Ovid's carnal realm. Shakespeare's Titania exults in the sensuous, mutable realities of an earthly moonlit forest. Her name derives from the *Metamorphoses*, where it designates a number of female deities descended from the Titans: Diana, Latona, Hecate, Circe, Pyrrha. Since the first three are goddesses of night, the epithet *titania* embraces "in one comprehensive symbol the whole female empire of mystery and night belonging to mythology," rich and complex associations connected with the silver bow of Diana, the magic cup of Circe, and the triple crown of Hecate. Oberon's corresponding epithet, "King of Shadows" (III. ii. 347), is Shakespeare's translation of *umbrarum dominus* and *umbrarum rex*, Ovid's names for Pluto, lord of the lower world.²⁷ Instead of Gloriana's transcendent nuances, the name "Titania" epitomizes the earthy values and moral dubiety of Shakespeare's fairy monarchs: spirit power combined with titanic pride.

As an immanent and elemental spirit,²⁸ Titania engages joyfully in the dance of the elements, the sweet blendings of earth and air, tree and flower, finding in them (not in heavenly abstractions)

her source of delight: "on hill, in dale, forest, or mead, / By paved fountain or by rushy brook / We . . . dance our ringlets to the whistling wind" (*MND*, II. i. 82-86; cf. II. i. 140-41, IV. i. 86 ff). Gorgeous and loquacious, she is fully and shamelessly exposed on stage in her bodily splendor, so much a part of the sensory world that her tempestuous spirit (together with that of Oberon) is the very breath that turns Fortune's wheel, the passion that impels worldly dissension and change:

. . . the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter, change
Their wonted liveries; and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which.
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

(II. i. 111-17)

The central mystery of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* resides in the moral and mythic ambivalence of these elemental spirits: is Titania the soul of great creating Nature, as implied by her attendant's boast and the fecundity of her bower (II. i. 1 ff, 249-56; II. ii. 1 ff; III. i. 153-60, 164-74; IV. i. 1-46, 52-55); or is she the spirit of annihilative Mutability, *la donna è mobile*, amorous of Theseus, feuding with Oberon, doting on Bottom?²⁹ Oberon is similarly complex: does he practice benevolent magic as a simulacrum of Divine Providence, or does this "King of Shadows," with his proud desire for mastery, share equally in inciting the amorous confusions of the dark forest world?

Though admired as god-like "immortals," Shakespeare's fairies, like Spenser's, also figure an idealized level of human existence. For both poets (as for creators of Tudor processions and Stuart masques), the fairies exemplify aristocrats, whose power and privilege can exploit all gifts of nature, all earthly delights.³⁰ The crucial difference in the two poetic visions is that Spenser's fairy nobility, though shimmering with heroic fantasy, are always constrained by natural and moral law: torn by briars, wounded in combat, captivated by forces of evil, burned by their own passions.³¹ For their errant moral choices Spenser's fairies pay a staggering price: until a supernatural redeeming power intervenes, Florimel's beauty will remain imprisoned in Proteus' realm of changeless change (*FQ*, IV. xii.); Amoret's heart will be chained and transfixed by desire and fear of mastery (*FQ*, III. xi-xii); Serena will be raped and wounded by the bleating beast of scandal (*FQ*, VI. iii. 20-27); and their male counterparts—Marinell, Scudamour, Calepine—will be unable to liberate their lovers from the bondage

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which their own narcissism, jealousy, and truancy have helped to sponsor.

Shakespeare's fairy aristocrats, on the other hand, enjoy the comic fantasy of a prowess beyond natural and moral limits, with remarkable freedom from painful consequences. Instead of providing veils and armor to protect Titania's chaste loyalty (which she has already compromised), Oberon provokes her further descent into vulgar and bestial carnality! As he goes to put the deluding drops of concupiscence into her eyes, he imagines, in the play's most densely sensuous passage, Titania immersed in her flowery world of earth-oriented senses—smell, taste, and touch:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.

(II. i. 249-52)

Attracted by the luxuriant beauty of this transient bower, Oberon also apprehends it as the nursery of Titania's drowsy conscience and willful self-delusion. Since he cannot prevent her carnal obsession (which he shares, as his overdetermined description suggests), he will fulfill it *in extremis*.

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in;
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

(II. i. 253-58)

With Titania's imagination thus steeped in lulling flowers and gaudy snakeskin (nature and art combining to sponsor the vain self-delusions of fleshliness), Oberon subjects his mate to the consummate delusion of the wounded flower's juice. His reason for provoking her "hateful" adultery with "some vile thing" remains exceedingly vague, and the limp paratactic style of this crucial speech ("And . . . And . . . And") ensures that we will never fully ascertain Oberon's motives or degree of insight.

The indulgences of Shakespeare's fairies (corrosive jollity, vengeful jealousy, mutual adultery—all with violent undertones) recall fears of their trickery, as well as the Celtic view of fairies as fallen angels.³² Titania does not simply yield to a beastly lover; her aroused passion *ravishes* him, while her moonlike conscience acknowledges her loss of self-control:

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The moon, methinks, looks with a watery eye,
 And when she weeps, weeps every little flower,
 Lamenting some enforced chastity.
 Tie up my love's tongue, bring him silently.

(III. i. 191-94)

The lesson, presumably, is that fairy aristocrats, even the great queen of fairies, have the same capacity for robbing themselves in carnal passion and self-deceit as ordinary folk; and the deeper lesson is that fairy spirits, like humankind in general, can best learn their true nature by enduring fully the descent into sensuous experience.³³ As Robert Burton wryly observes, "The last and surest remedy [for love-melancholy], to be put in practice in the utmost place, when no other means will take effect, is to let them go together, and enjoy one another: *Potissima cura est ut heros amasia potiatur.*"³⁴ In contrast to Spenser's peremptory destruction of the deluding "bower of blisse" (*FQ*, II. xii) and his persistent effort to control eroticism through iconographic framing and "arming" the body, Shakespeare liberally indulges bodily passion and enhances it through art.

Gloriana's influence can "fashion a gentleman" out of any caste: a bear-child, a savage man, even base Braggadocchio may glimpse Belphoebe's beauty (*FQ*, VI. iv; II. iii); yet full communion with Gloriana-Belphoebe is restricted to those who can emulate Prince Arthur's *arête*. In contrast, Shakespeare focuses on the spirit-power of the rustic: Bottom's vigorous imaginative sympathy ("let me play the lion too"), as well as the innate moral sense which makes him "gentle" and "courteous," gives the lie to Oberon's "some vile thing" (II. ii. 33). Though Bottom (like Spenser's Braggadocchio) is base-born, a consummate braggart, and an unlearned and unrefined "ass," he is ultimately revealed to be worthy of Titania's affection, and of Duke Theseus' bounty and preference. This is perhaps Shakespeare's cleverest reversal: instead of envisioning a regal fairy who refines base-born humanity, Shakespeare shows the proud fairies, then other aristocrats, being humanized by Bottom's crude but gentle art.

Bottom's mixed nature and fundamental benevolence typifies the play as a whole. Despite the fairies' self-indulgences, and despite Puck's persistent aligning of himself with cruel pranks, night-terrors, and "Damned spirits" (II. i. 32-57; III. ii. 378-87; V. i. 357-72), the embattled tone of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* concludes in hard-won amiability, overcoming traditional fears about fairies and the moonlit fantasy they epitomize.³⁵ Despite her proud willfulness, Titania bejewels nature with dew, dispels its evils with song, strives to refine Bottom's nature, and instead of stealing a human child, charitably adopts the orphan of a "votary."

Though Bottom eats fairy food and apparently enjoys sexual intimacy with a fairy, he suffers no ill effects from Titania's dotage and easily returns to his beloved lesser life. Finally Oberon, distinguishing his sun-loving fairies from demonic spirits of darkness,³⁶ uses song and dance to master the natural order, and providentially blesses the newlyweds and their issue. Thus Shakespeare's immersion of rustics, courtiers, and fairy-spirits in elemental carnal nature does not obviate their intrinsic morality, but makes it evolve from within conditions of embodiment.

IV.

Having "incorporated" the fairy queen into his own sensuous, processive, morally-ambivalent idiom, Shakespeare makes this artistic metastasis the basis for Theseus' last-act choice between Spenserian and Shakespearean types of art: he will reject those entertainment proposals which devalue common earthly passion, each associated with an artist who is increasingly refined and alienated from his audience.

Theseus first disposes of "The battle of the centaurs, to be sung / By an Athenian eunuch to the harp" (V. i. 44-45). This effete image of the artist suggests a dig at university and courtly fashions, "Athenian" being Lyly's favorite epithet for Oxbridge scholars.³⁷ Indeed, the satiric punch derives not so much from the indecorousness of recalling the centaurs disrupting the Lapiths' wedding, as from having the tale dispassionately chanted by the refined, urbane eunuch.

Next Theseus discards "The riot of the tipsy Bacchanals, / Tearing the Thracian singer in their rage" (48-49), again showing an alienated artist who exacerbates rather than resolves human passion, either because of Orpheus' other-worldly mood after the loss of Eurydice, or because (according to Alexandrian tradition) he preferred "the love of tender boys" rather than of women—thus extending the implications of the artist as Athenian eunuch.³⁸

Though we, and Shakespeare's own audience, may discern the inappropriate brutality of the first two entries, Theseus evades that recognition. He rejects these tales, not because the male and female furor of centaurs and Bacchantes is unfit for arousing connubial feeling, but because he has already experienced them with Hippolyta ("That have I told my love, in glory of my kinsman Hercules"; "That is an old device; and it was played / When I came last from Thebes a conqueror"). Implicitly, however, both tales reenact courtship's discord ("I woo'd thee with my sword, / And won thy love doing thee injuries," I. i. 16-17), and the tales' complementary frenzies have been made to celebrate patriarchal

conquest, glorifying Theseus and his kinsman Hercules. For his wedding Theseus wishes to establish a different mood ("I will wed thee in another key," I. i. 18). He seeks sensuous, heartfelt experience—the "passion of loud laughter" which these earnest, ignorant men have provoked in Philostrate; but even more, he values the performers' intent, the sincere desire to please which carries the rustics' art beyond their humble selves and beyond violent, dominating impulse: "Love . . . and tongue-tied simplicity / In least speak most, to my capacity" (V. i. 81-105).

Philostrate's least attractive entertainment is distinctly (though reductively) Spenserian: "The thrice-three Muses mourning for the death / Of learning, late deceased in beggary" (52-53) which records the total and voluntary alienation of the artist. Theseus expresses his most resounding disapproval: "That is some satire, keen and critical, / Not sorting with a nuptial ceremony." Bednarz speculates on patronage rivalry which might have caused this parody of Spenser's "The Teares of the Muses."³⁹ Why has Shakespeare chosen "Teares" as the final and consummately ill-conceived art offering? We note its serious intent as an artistic manifesto, its symbolically weighty subject (the nine muses having been extensively annotated by Natalis Comes), and its ingenious Neoplatonic arrangement of the muses, which Shakespeare parodies with the archaic epithet, "thrice-three."⁴⁰ The poem thus claims a lofty theme, a refined audience of noble patrons, and the exalted purpose of refashioning human nature through the finest art: what better wedding gift? Yet it is clearly one of Spenser's least appealing works. With little evocation of sensuous human experience, it pounds out a repetitious jeremiad against commoners' insensitivity to art and against aristocrats' neglect of the artist—a litany of wounded elitism which forms the perfect target of Shakespeare's satire.

From the detached and impotent eunuch, harping about what he himself cannot experience, to the dismemberment of melancholic Orpheus, who having lost his own love will not cater to the rampant passions of others, we move at last to this absolute severance of the artist from his audience—not simply because they fail to appreciate his art, but because he has abstracted himself out of existence.⁴¹ Displaced by the metonymy "learning," mourned by the *raffiné* Neoplatonized chorus of "thrice-three Muses," the artist has so lost himself in an archaic and elitist conception of Art, and has so preoccupied himself with self-pity because of others' failure to appreciate that abstraction, that there is no longer any earthy, passionate, substantial reality to sing about, either in his subject or in himself.

Shakespeare is quickly forgiven for parodying the presumptions of courtly and scholarly art when we realize that the fourth option, the marvelous misadventure of Bottom and the rustics, is a riotous burlesque of his own art: "A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus / And his love Thisby; very tragical mirth." Peter Quince's production farcically exhibits numerous earmarks of Shakespeare's enterprise: his troupe's catering to the Age's thirst for youthful romantic comedy; their paradoxical conjoining of tragic and comic impulses ("very tragical mirth"); and their earthy sensational embodiment of the irrepressible instincts of humankind, both high and low. Of course, most disarming is the way this "palpable-gross play" (V. i. 353) parodies his own company's noble rendering of *Romeo and Juliet*.⁴²

The title of this fourth offering includes no aloof and scorned image of the artist, and rightly so, since Shakespeare, as the adaptable, resourceful hack, Peter Quince, has included himself in the work of art, which is itself integrated into the common moonshine and beastliness of everyday life. As artist-director, Quince has not abstracted himself out of the picture, but is, like Shakespeare, intimately involved as performer and associate with his fellow-actors and audience. In the bumbling prologue, as he lays his own quavering voice and repressed syntax on the line, he is far more self-conscious than the Athenian eunuch, the disintegrating Orpheus, or the self-immolating Neoplatonic artist; yet in his very self-exposure Quince contributes to this art of vulgar immanence which delightfully jumbles its "rare vision" with "a peck of provender."

Rather than the spirited prowess of a fairy queen (beauteous, willful, enchanting Titania, whose presence seemed destined to dominate and define the play), it is Bottom and friends who reveal themselves as the metaphoric touchstone of Shakespeare's artistic vision, the fulfillment of his comic epiphany. In the contest between the two fairy queens, and between two contrary modes of art, Shakespeare has impishly stacked the deck and altered the rules so that Bottom may proclaim, "the short and the long is, our play is preferred."

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Notes

¹"To the Gentlemen Students of Both Universities" [1589], *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, 3 vols., ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), vol. 3, p. 323; *Strange Newes, of the Intercepting of Certain Letters* [1592], McKerrow, vol. 1, pp. 281-82, 299. (I have normalized the usage of *u* and *v*, *j* and *i*.)

The Upstart Crow

²Watson, *An Eglogue Upon the Death of the Right Honorable Sir Francis Walsingham* (London, 1590), Sigs. C3v-C4; Edwards, *Cephalus and Procris. Narcissus* [1595], ed. W. E. Buckley (London: Nichols and Sons, 1882), p. 62. For other eulogists during 1590-96, see *Spenser Allusions in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. William Wells (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 19-53.

³Citations of *The Faerie Queene* are taken from A. C. Hamilton's edition (London and New York: Longman, 1977).

⁴*Virgideiariarum. Six Books . . . of Tooth-less Satires* [1597], in *The Works of Joseph Hall*, 12 vols. (Oxford: D. A. Talboys, 1839), "Defiance to Envy," vol. 12, pp. 21-24, "Satire IV," vol. 12, p. 164. Lavish praise for Spenser's poetry continues during 1597-98, but at times implies controversy: see Sylvester, Salusbury, Speght, Meres, Barnfield (Spenser's "deepe Conceit is such, / As passing all Conceit, needs no defence") in *Spenser Allusions*, pp. 53-63.

⁵Guilpin, *Skialethia* (London, 1598), "Satire VI," Sig. Er.

⁶*The Scourge of Villanie. Three bookes of Satyres* [1598], in *The Works of John Marston*, 3 vols., ed. A. H. Bullen (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887), vol. 3, p. 341.

⁷*Spenser Allusions*, p. 64.

⁸*Representations*, 2 (1983), 61-94; rpt. in *Representing the English Renaissance*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), pp. 31-64.

⁹Efforts to date *A Midsummer Night's Dream* have focused on seven wedding celebrations ranging from 1590 to 1600, the two in 1595 and 1596 seeming most likely. The Stanley-Vere wedding (Jan. 26, 1595) is advocated by E. K. Chambers, "The Occasion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, ed. Israel Gollancz (Oxford: Univ. Press, 1916); J. Dover Wilson, *Shakespeare's Happy Comedies* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 184-220; and James P. Bednarz, "Imitations of Spenser in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Renaissance Drama*, 14 (1983), 79-102. The Berkeley-Carey match (Feb. 19, 1596) is advocated by Harold Brooks in Arden's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London: Methuen, 1979), pp. lv-lvii, and by Steven W. May, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Carey-Berkeley Wedding," *Renaissance Papers*, 3 (1983), 43-52. Bednarz's argument for satire of Spenser in the 1595 wedding, stressing Burleigh's role and rivalry for Stanley's patronage, may be countered by rivalry for Hunsdon's patronage in the 1596 festivity. Either date (a year before publication of *The Faerie Queene's* second portion, or a month after) would suit the timing for a comic retort to Spenser's fame. Shakespeare parodies the seminal fairy conceit not as subliminal questioning of the myths supporting Elizabeth's rule but as a direct absorption and "strong misreading" of Spenser's art, a remarkable instance of what Harold Bloom has called "anxiety of influence."

¹⁰Kermode, "The Mature Comedies," in *Early Shakespeare*, eds. John R. Brown and Bernard Harris, *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies*, 3 (London: Arnold, 1961), pp. 214-20.

¹¹For Lyly's influence, especially on *Love's Labours Lost* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see G. K. Hunter, *John Lyly: The Humanist as Courtier* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), pp. 298-349; L. A. Beaurline, *Jonson and Elizabethan Comedy* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1978), pp. 86-102.

¹²My essay does not treat the complex evolution of Spenser's artistic intent in *The Faerie Queene* but the changing view of Spenser during the 1590's, especially after Shakespeare's comic revision of fairyland. Spenser's Platonic-Christian credo (see Lewis' *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, 1944; Kermode's *Spenser*, 1965) and his dynastic eulogy (Cain's *Praise in The Faerie Queene*, 1978; Wells' *Spenser's Faerie Queene and the Cult of Elizabeth*, 1983) remain central to readings of *The Faerie Queene*, but have been complicated by psychoanalytic, deconstructive, and new historicist readings which stress Spenser's repressed eroticism, his increasing failure to enforce closure in plot and in moral allegory,

and his struggle to sustain faith in Elizabeth as patron and *imago Dei*. See, e.g., Harry Berger, Jr., "A Secret Discipline: *The Faerie Queene*, Book VI," in *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 35-75; Richard Neuse, "Book Six as Conclusion of *The Faerie Queene*," *ELH*, 35 (1968), 329-53; Patricia A. Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 54-113; Jonathan Goldberg, *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1981); Jan Karel Kouwenhoven, *Apparent Narrative as Thematic Metaphor: The Organization of "The Faerie Queene"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Balachandra Rajan, *The Form of the Unfinished: English Poetics from Spenser to Pound* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 44-84; David Lee Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988); Paul A. Marquis, "Problems of Closure in *The Faerie Queene*," *ESC*, 16 (1990), 149-63.

¹³On *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as comic metatheater or "defense of poetry," see R. W. Dent, "Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15 (1964), 115-29; David P. Young, *Something of Great Constancy* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1966); Diana Akers Rhoads, *Shakespeare's Defense of Poetry: A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest* (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 1985).

¹⁴Marlowe evidently pinched twelve passages from Spenser's circulating manuscript: see *Tamburlaine the Greate* [1590], in *The Works of Christopher Marlowe*, ed. C. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1910), Part 1: I. ii. 393; II. ii. 617-19; II. iii. 1215-21; V. ii. 1902-04, 1916-35, 1941-54, 2036-44, 2071-79, 2083-85; Part 2: III. v. 3650-51, IV. i. 3860-71, 4090-111.

¹⁵A. G. van Kranendonk, "Spenserian Echoes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *English Studies*, 14 (1932), pp. 209ff; Karl Hammerle, "Das Laubmotiv bei Shakespeare und Spenser und die Frage: Wer Waren Bottom und die *Little Western Flower*," *Anglia*, 71 (1953), 310-30; "Das Titanialager des Sommernachtstraumes als Nachhall des topos vom Locus Amoenus," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 90 (1954), 279-84; "Shakespeare's Platonische Wende," *Anglo-Americana*, ed. Karl Brunner (Stuttgart: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1955) pp. 62-71; "Ein Muttermal des deutschen Pyramus und die Spenserechoes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Friedrich Wild*, ed. Karl Brunner et al (Vienna and Stuttgart: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1958), pp. 52-66; Brooks' introduction to the Arden edition, pp. xxxiv-xxxix, lviii-lxii; and Bednarz, "Imitations of Spenser in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," pp. 79-102.

¹⁶*Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1991), ch. 6-7. Paglia treats much of Shakespeare's work as riposte to Spenser, explaining the grand "Dionysian" heroines of *As You Like It* and *Antony and Cleopatra* as rejoinders to the "Apollonian" conceits of Gloriana (pp. 200, 212); but Shakespeare's most direct reaction to Spenser is his comic, then tragicomic revision of fairyland: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Paglia's brilliant analysis is, moreover, skewed by her Nietzschean categories, her focus on Spenserian psychopathy (voyeurism, rape), her bias for the Dionysian: she disprizes Spenser's Platonic-Christian transcendentalism.

¹⁷Before *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare rarely alludes to supernatural realities, except to demystify their claim to power: the suspected "sorcery" in *The Comedy of Errors*, Joan of Arc's discredited "witchcraft," Petruchio's "miraculous" taming of Kate. The only serious rendering of the supernatural in eleven plays preceding *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the brief haunting of *Richard III*.

¹⁸Much topical speculation is summarized in Furness' New Variorum Edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1895), pp. 72-91; Brooks, pp. lxvi-lxix. Citations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are from Brooks' Arden edition.

¹⁹According to legend, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was requested by Elizabeth (see H. J. Oliver's Arden ed., London: Methuen, 1971, pp. xlv ff); the nostalgic tribute to Elizabeth in *Henry VIII* was composed after her death, and the play was probably co-authored with Fletcher (see R. A. Foakes' Arden ed., London: Methuen, 1957).

²⁰See J. E. Neale, *Elizabeth I and Her Parliaments 1559-1581* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1958), pp. 49, 109. Cf. Montrose, pp. 64, 87 (see note 8).

²¹For Shakespeare's preoccupation with this parody, cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, I. iv. 53 ff (Queen Mab); and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, V. v. 38 ff (Mistress Quickly playing the Fairy Queen).

²²Subsequent taunts were never again as trenchant. When Ben Jonson remarks in *Timber; or, Discoveries* [1640] that "Spencer, in affecting the Ancients writ no Language," he hastens to add, "Yet I would have him read for his matter."

²³The echo need not signify, since both poets might be using a stock phrase from folklore. Yet, when taken with the later conspicuous allusion to "The Teares of the Muses" (*MND*, V. i. 52-55), one suspects a blatant signalling in Shakespeare's use of these lines to introduce his own version of English fairies: they replicate lines near the end of Spenser's sixth legend, suggesting that Shakespeare has finished reading the second installment (perhaps self-consciously hinting to us that he has done so); the attendant's speech highlights Spenser's main conceit and idealizing mode ("I serve the Fairy Queen. . ."); and in answer to Puck's query about her wanderings, the fairy "places" herself, not only in relation to the fairy queen, but, by means of the borrowed verses, in relation to the literary landscape of *The Faerie Queene*.

²⁴J. O. Halliwell-Phillips, *Memoranda on the Midsummer Night's Dream* (Brighton, 1879), pp. 6-7; *Spenser Allusions*, p. 79.

²⁵As in the human apocalypse of *Revelations*, where the gates of New Jerusalem are pearls, Shakespeare's jewel imagery, besides evoking court-life (Brooks, cxxvii), connotes human rarefaction through art: Titania attempts to refine Bottom ("they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep," *MND*, III. i. 157); Ferdinand is ennobled through the suffering induced by Ariel's song ("Those are pearls that were his eyes," *Tmp.* I. ii. 401).

²⁶Spenser's Christian-Platonic bias does not preclude Gloriana's being typified in sensuous forms, like Britomart's sweaty radiance, or the beauties of Belphoebe, Medina, Concord, Mercilla, Isis, Venus, and others. These types, and numerous antitypes (Duessa, Lucifera, Acrasia, Hellenore, Radigund, etc.), provide a rich tapestry of characterization, including deeply erotic elements. But Spenser's Christian-Platonic lens (his allegorical medium) distances readers from sensory passion, heightening erotic power in the very process of refusing to "disarm" intellectually and submit to it.

²⁷T. S. Baynes, *Shakespeare Studies and Essay on English Dictionaries* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894), pp. 210-11.

²⁸On Shakespeare's fairies as earthy elemental sprites of folklore (combined with nobler types from medieval romance and ancient myth), see the appendix to the New Cambridge edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. A. T. Quiller Couch and J. Dover Wilson; Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1930); Katherine M. Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959); Maureen Duffy, *The Erotic World of Faery* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972).

²⁹Titania's mutable magnificence prefigures that of Rosalind and Cleopatra, whom Paglia depicts as consummate examples of Shakespeare's "Dionysian" art (see note 16).

³⁰See Paul A. Olson, "A *Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Meaning of Court Marriage," *English Literary History*, 24 (1957), 95-119; Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1927), pp. 324-49; Allardyce Nicoll, *Stuart Masques and the Renaissance Stage* (London: George G. Harrap, 1937), pp. 72-75, 177, 202-4; Stephen Orgel, *The Jonsonian Masque* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1981; orig. 1967), pp. 87-91.

³¹On Spenser's highly moralized fairies in *The Faerie Queene*, and on his symbolic counterpointing of fairies (with immanent spiritual powers) and Britons (with transcendent spiritual potential), see Isabel Rathborne, *The Meaning of Spenser's Fairyland* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1965; orig. 1937); Harry Berger Jr., *The Allegorical Temper* (New Haven: Archon Books, 1967; orig. 1958), ch. 4; Thomas P. Roche, Jr., *The Kindly Flame: A Study of the Third and Fourth Books of Spenser's Faerie Queene* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 33-50.

³²W. Y. Evans Wentz, *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1911), ch. 3, p. 6; Duffy, pp. 13-31. On the dark undertones in the fairy amours of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Jan Kott, "Titania and the Ass's Head," in *Shakespeare Our Contemporary*, trans. Boleslaw Taborski (London: Methuen, 1972), pp. 171-90; David P. Young, *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"* (1966), pp. 23-9; Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Comedy of Love* (1974), pp. 104-6, 110; and Brooks' Arden ed., pp. lxxv-lxxvi, cvii.

³³Shakespeare's sensual reifying of human and fairy spirits in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seems a youthful indulgence in light of his later severe chastening of human love and of imaginative fairy power in *The Tempest*. In both plays, however, Shakespeare insists on a body-oriented (in contrast to Spenser's soul-oriented) criterion of human nature and of artful fictions. Ariel, though greatly refined, is still an immanent, elemental spirit: "Where the bee sucks, there suck I" (V. i. 88); and Prospero finally frees this dainty spirit to enjoy the elements, not to transcend them. Spenser's fictions privilege the transcendent realm of spirit, which must frame and order the earthly bower into a mirroring analogue of divinity.

³⁴"The most effective cure is to let the lover enjoy his sweetheart," *The Anatomy of Melancholy* [1621], ed. Holbrook Jackson (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 228 ff (III. ii. 5. 5). Burton indulges Eros mainly in the context of matrimony, but his catalog includes many extramarital amours.

³⁵Briggs, p. 77; Duffy, p. 82 (see note 28).

³⁶Again echoing Spenser, who in *Shepherd's Calendar* distinguishes between "elvish ghosts" and "frendly Faeries" ("June," lines 23-26).

³⁷Lyly, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*, in *The Complete Works of John Lyly*, ed. R. W. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon, 1902), vol. 1, pp. 184-5, 232, 241, 245, 257, 259, 262, 271-6, 279-80, 284-5, 288, 306-9, 313-19, 322; *Euphues and His England* (Bond, vol. 2), pp. 11, 13, 81, 97, 100-1, 107, 150, 185-88, 196, 217-18, 227-28.

³⁸Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, x. 84; Virgil, *Georgics*, iv. 516.

³⁹See notes 9, 15.

⁴⁰For Shakespeare's earlier mockery of "thrice-three," see Costard's *reductio ad absurdum* in *Love's Labours Lost*, V. ii. 484-95. Costard's confusion over how each of the actors playing "the three Worthies" can represent three figures (alluding to the doubling and tripling of roles in Elizabethan theater) makes havoc of Neoplatonic and Christian Trinitarian doctrines, by which the trinity of powers in human nature images the emanation of divine hypostases, enabling the human self to unfold into many selves. Costard, like Bottom, will go about his business without worrying overmuch about the deeper implications of play-acting: "O

Lord, sir, the parties themselves, the actors, sir, will show whereuntil it doth amount." But unlike Bottom's god-like aspiration to play every role (and to "be perfit"), Costard knows his limits: "For mine own part, I am, as they say, but to perfect one man in one poor man."

⁴¹The three rejected artworks are perhaps a playful pillorying of three specific rival-poets: Lyly as "Athenian" eunuch, Marlowe as dismembered Orpheus, Spenser as self-abnegating proselyte of Neoplatonism.

⁴²S. B. Hemingway, "The Relation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to *Romeo and Juliet*," *Modern Language Notes* (1911); Henry Alonzo Myers, "Romeo and Juliet and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Tragedy and Comedy," in *Tragedy: A View of Life* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1956). If *Romeo and Juliet* is the earlier composition, then the hilarious ironies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* find their capstone in the degree to which Shakespeare's theatrical enterprise is included in the burlesque.

**“Was ever woman in this humour won?”:
Love and Loathing in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*
by Jack E. Trotter**

Typical of nineteenth-century assessments of what is perhaps the most debated scene in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*, the wooing of Lady Anne in Act I, is Henry Hudson’s remark that Richard’s remarkable triumph is due “not so much to any special vice or defect in [Anne] as to his witchcraft of tongue and wit, so put into play as to disconcert all her powers of resistance.”¹ Like S. T. Coleridge before him, whose own estimation of Richard sets the tone for much of the century’s criticism of the play, Hudson is enthralled with Richard’s intellectuality, displayed above all by the almost demonic verbal pyrotechnics which have tried the skills of the best leading men down through the centuries. More recent critics are not so enamoured as their predecessors with the Promethean man of will. Robert Ornstein, among others, has noted that some of the supposed victims of Richard’s verbal “witchcraft” are better described as willingly self-deceived. Yet even Ornstein is dazzled by Richard’s powers of improvisation, and he views the seduction of Anne as a not altogether serious *jeu d’ esprit* meant to showcase Richard’s talents.²

Several feminist critics have attempted to redress what in their view has been a consistent overemphasis on Richard’s triumphant prowess. At its worst this line of criticism has resulted in the kind of reductive psychologizing which prompts Marguerite Waller, for instance, to claim that Richard is “politically and intellectually stupid, cowardly and boring. . . . He is a relatively common species of manipulative narcissist.”³ A more productive feminist view is seen in the history plays in general, and in *Richard III* in particular, a movement away from the feminine toward a dominant and even ultramasculine principle. Thus Richard is not simply a garden variety chauvinist, but is the very embodiment of an increasingly misogynistic world-view.⁴

In what follows, I hope to show that Richard’s hatred for women is indeed a key thematic factor in the play, but I will argue that his misogyny is best perceived as an expression of loathing for the flesh itself, the flesh understood as a sign of creaturely dependence. Over against the flesh, Richard opposes in dualistic fashion a counterworld, a deathless world spun out of the vacuity of an imaginary self, a radically autonomous self unconditioned by time or history. And whatever the weaknesses of earlier generations of critics, they were surely justified in detecting an element of the

uncanny in Richard's performance. For there is in his revolt against the order of nature something bordering upon the heroic. That revolt is in essence, I will argue, a gnostic quest, an antithetical ritual of self-begetting. If, as philosopher Hans Jonas has suggested, there is a "hidden gnosticism" in the modern mind, it is possible to see in Richard of Gloucester's emergence upon the Elizabethan stage the originary model for a long line of gnostic heroes, or antiheroes—from Milton's Satan to Percy's Lancelot—whose nihilistic longings for the knowledge (*gnosis*) of the abyss remind us of the undercurrent of displaced religiosity which has shaped, and continues to shape, our modernity.

Before turning to the wooing scene which will be the focus of this essay, it will be useful to glance at Richard's opening soliloquy and its invocation of a number of themes analogous to those of gnostic myth as analyzed by Jonas and others. Most important is the overarching motif of catastrophic birth, about which cluster the themes of exile-in-time, of the imprisoning power of the world and the flesh, of cheating nature, of a sense of the self as essentially alien, of a secret call from the "beyond" and a response in the form of heroic defiance.⁵ The malformed body Richard presents to his audience is the very image of the gnostic *tibil*, the body-prison: "Who has thrown me into the body-stump?" laments a second century gnostic seeker of the Mandaean sect, expressing thus a radical dualism of "flesh" and "spirit" which enters into the Christian psyche by way of Augustine. So, too, does Richard seem to despair, as his repeated use of the passive voice well illustrates:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass;
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling Nature . . .⁶

That Richard has been "cheated of feature" is his lament, but it is also, we suspect, his secret pride; his want of "fair proportion" may be, paradoxically, the sign of his election. For as Jonas has argued, the suffering of the gnostic self-in-exile "is at the same time a mark of excellence, a source of power and of a secret life unknown to the environment and in the last resort impregnable to it" (50). Of this election or "call," Richard offers a mysterious hint in the reference to "dissembling Nature." If his frightening aspect is the very emblem of reprobation, that emblem may be read (as Richard reads it) in antithetical fashion as a veiled sign of *gnosis* or special knowledge. As the passage continues, we sense Richard's

apparent passivity giving way to a new will to power born of the conviction of absolute difference:

Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,
 Why I, in this weak piping time of peace,
 Have no delight to pass away the time,
 Unless to see my shadow in the sun
 And descant on mine own deformity.
 And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover
 To entertain these fair, well-spoken days,
 I am determined to prove a villain
 And hate the idle pleasures of these days.
 Plots I have laid, inductions dangerous.

(I. i. 20-30)

If his "rudely stamped" form sets him apart from others, from "this breathing world" (emphasis added), it also masks an inward superiority. Jonas has noted that the gnostic vision of a radically transcendent "beyond" inevitably demarcates "this world" from "that world"—the world in which one's omnipotence is realized: "The demonstrative pronoun has thus become a relevant addition to the term world; and the combination is . . . a fundamental linguistic symbol of Gnosticism, closely related to the primary symbol of the alien."⁷ I might add that a disturbing ambiguity hovers about the penultimate recurrence of the first-person pronoun: "I am determined to prove a villain." In what sense is Richard "determined"? What are we to make of an assertion of freedom predicated upon necessity? An answer may emerge if we consider what the above-quoted passage reveals about Richard's sense of time.

Into "this breathing world" Richard has been thrown prematurely ("sent before my time") and "scarce half made up." Born, we will recall, "legs foward" (3 *Henry VI*, V. vi. 71), his sense of time is wholly dualistic; his movement is headlong out of the past, out of the catastrophe of his birth, irreversibly toward the future. Between the two lies a vacuous present in which Gloucester cannot, or will not, "delight to pass away the time." The modernity of this future oriented sense of time will be evident to most readers; less familiar may be its similarity to the gnostic concept of time enunciated in the following formula attributed to the heresiarch Valentinus: "What makes us free is the knowledge who we are, what we have become; where we were, wherein we have been thrown; whereto we speed, wherfrom we are redeemed."⁸ In terms that might well apply to Richard's opening soliloquy, Jonas notes the affinity between the Valentinian formula and Pascal's

lament at having been “cast into the infinite immensity of spaces,” or Heidegger’s “flungness” (*geworfenheit*): “The term . . . expresses the original violence done to me in making me be where I am and what I am, the passivity of my choiceless emergence into an existing world which I did not make and whose law is not mine.”⁹

To achieve the gnosis or redemption held out in the Valentinian formula (the unlimited freedom or omnipotence that beckons out of the future), a crisis must be provoked—the vacuity of the “now” must be filled with frenetic plotting, or, rather, counterplotting against the conspiracy of this world. Richard must have a “world” to “bustle in” (I. i. 152), but it will be a world fashioned in his own image. That he could choose otherwise and follow the traditional Christian pattern of heroism, the model which offers itself equally to cripples and the fair proportioned, is evaded here. Richard embraces the material sign of his reprobation as the emblem of an inward and unconditional freedom. As Georges Bataille has said of the pattern of gnostic revolt, “it is a question above all of not submitting oneself, and with oneself one’s reason, to whatever is more elevated, to whatever can give a borrowed authority to the being that I am.”¹⁰ Thus in Richard’s “I am determined to prove a villain,” we can hear an echo of the threat of the unrepentant Adam in the heresiarch Mani’s misreading of the Eden narrative. Having eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, Adam learns the truth of his imprisonment and cries, “Woe, woe unto the shaper of my body, unto those who fettered my soul.”¹¹ Richard’s punning “determined” is the rhetorical equivalent of an inward evasion of the very possibility of grace, that is, of a sacramental redemption within the order of nature. He is determined to avert his eyes from the mortal shadow cast by the sun—ever the symbol of all “true” representation—and to “prove” himself a villain. We should not, therefore, be misled by the ironic “since I cannot prove a lover,” for two scenes later he proves himself a liar.

In the often discussed wooing scene (I. iii) in which Richard engages the Lady Anne in an inverted Petrarchan rhetorical duel, a gnostic structural pattern, or dialectic, emerges which may be described in terms borrowed from Harold Bloom, a literary critic whose use of the gnostic paradigm is by now well known. According to Bloom, “[W]hat a Gnostic or strong poet knows is what only a strong reading of a belated poem or a lie-against-time teaches: a freedom compounded of three elements, and these are: *negation, evasion, extravagance* (emphasis added).”¹² Negation may here be understood as a figurative severance from, and a flight out of, a dead and imprisoning time past—time understood beneath the sign of the flesh (that which decays). Evasion follows upon negation and appears as improvisation, as a will to deception which

would preclude the redemptive possibility of time present. On the "rhetorical level," according to Bloom, evasion "is always misinterpretation or misreading."¹³ And, finally, extravagance as the ultimate term of the dialectic, may be understood as the confident assumption of *gnosis* or omnipotence.

The wooing, or better yet, seduction of Anne begins with a powerful symbolic negation of the traditional Christian ceremonial "binding" of profane time by way of sacramental ritual and ceremony. Following in solemn procession the bearers of the royal corpse, Anne mourns the death of the saintly King Henry VI. The rhythm of the verse in these opening lines is the rhythm of sacred time, of the *plenitudo et extensio* which binds the living and dead, a bond now sacralized by ritual incantation:

Set down your honorable load—
 If honor may be shrouded in a hearse—
 Whilst I awhile obsequiously lament
 The untimely fall of virtuous Lancaster.
 (I. ii. 1-4)

The emotional weight of the passage falls squarely upon the word "untimely," which is of course a reference to Henry's murder at the hands of Gloucester, whose fate it is to be untimely. And at the thought of Richard, Anne's lament rises toward a crescendo of curses barely restrained by formal repetition. Here she addresses the slain king:

Be it lawful that I invoke thy ghost
 To hear the lamentations of poor Anne,
 Wife to thy Edward, to thy slaught' red son
 Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds!
 Lo, in these windows that let forth thy life
 I pour the helpless balm of my poor eyes.
 O, cursed be the hand that made these holes!
 Cursed the heart that had the heart to do it!
 Cursed the blood that let this blood from hence!
 (I. ii. 8-16)

Despite the considerable critical ingenuity expended upon this scene, no one has noticed that Anne's curses are themselves a violation of the norms of Christian charity, and thus already a profanation of this funeral rite. Richard is waiting in the wings, taking her curses—so full of the venom upon which he feeds—for his cue. Indeed, the curse which follows repeats the emphasis upon Richard's untimeliness, for Anne wishes upon him an offspring who will be—just as he was—"abortive . . . prodigious, and untimely brought to light" (I. ii 21-22).

The Upstart Crow

But Anne's violation of the sanctity of the funeral rite is not of the same order as Richard's violent and impious intrusion:

Villains, set down the corse, or, by Saint Paul,
 I'll make a corse of him that disobeyes!
Gentleman. My Lord, stand back, and let the coffin pass.
Richard. Unmannered dog! Stand thou, when I command!
 Advance thy halberd higher than my breast,
 Or by Saint Paul, I'll strike thee to my foot
 And spurn thee, beggar, for thy boldness.
 (I. ii. 36-42)

We would do well to remember just how sobering an iconographic presence this royal corpse must have been for an Elizabethan audience. For as Kantorowicz reminds us, in his funeral procession, "for the last time, the dead king acts out the person of the Dignity,"—that is, the *corpus mysticum*, the body mystical which was believed to contain the spiritual substance of the king's subjects.¹⁴

Richard's intrusion upon the scene is thus a double violation, for he flaunts the ceremonial strictures of both Church and State—negating, or rending with one brash thrust of his sword the fabric of ritual time. Anne does not fail to recognize his satanic aspect:

Avaunt thou dreadful minister of hell!
 Thou hadst but power over his mortal body;
 His soul thou canst not have. Therefore, begone.
 (I. ii. 46-48)

Like Lucifer, Richard is a hunter of souls. But, of course, it is not Henry's soul that this "minister of hell" is out to ensnare. That Anne does not immediately recognize the danger suggests something less than the vigilance counseled by the Apostle Paul, whose name Richard has sworn by, as we have seen, only a few lines earlier.¹⁵ Unlike Eve, whose seduction by the Serpent in the Garden may be a model for this temptation scene, Anne cannot claim prior ignorance of the reality of evil.¹⁶ In any case, Richard responds to her rebuff with all the evasive and insinuating flattery traditionally attributed to the Serpent:¹⁷ "Sweet saint, for charity, be not so curst" (I. i. 49). This is Richard's first parry in the dialectical swordplay which will end, quite literally, with Anne's refusal to take up Richard's proffered sword and plunge it in his breast. With that refusal she makes her fatal assent to the devil's bargain. But given the nature of her opponent, we might argue that by entering into the debate at all she has tacitly assented here at the outset.

Love and Loathing in Shakespeare's *Richard III*

To Anne's passionate curses, Richard returns Petrarchan conceits—that is, a series of verbal evasions or improvisations which might be termed misreadings, not merely of the “text” Anne provides, but of the Petrarchan text as well:

Richard. Lady, you know no rules of charity,
Which renders good for bad, blessings for curses.
Anne. Villain, thou know'st nor law of God nor man:
No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity.
Richard. But I know none, and therefore am no beast.
(I. ii. 68-72)

While his logic leaves something to be desired, Richard's misreading is not without some truth. Anne, with a mouthful of curses, has forgotten the “rules of charity.” And perhaps her vulnerability on this point is what tempts her farther into this “keen encounter of wits”—an encounter which can only lead to entrapment. For the moment, however, she proves an able opponent:

Anne. O wonderful, when devils tell the truth!
Richard. More wonderful, when angels are so angry.
Vouchsafe, divine perfection of a woman,
Of these supposed crimes to give me leave
By circumstance to acquit myself.
Anne. Vouchsafe, diffused infection of a man,
Of these known evils, but to give me leave
By circumstances t'accuse thy cursed self.
Richard. Fairer than tongue can name thee, let me have
Some patient leisure to excuse myself.
(I. ii. 74-82)

Anne is no mean rhetorician, but silence would be her best argument. Instead, she enters with a certain gusto into this semantic jousting; and in so doing she is already participating in a fiction of Richard's design. Yet punning upon his fawning “divine perfection” with her own “diffused infection,” Anne does inadvertently provide us with a clue to the nature of Richard's power, which lies precisely in his ability to manipulate the narratives that others construct in an attempt to define him, or, more importantly, to define themselves. Shakespeare's audience would have been particularly sensitive to the subtle identification between Richard and a plague-like “infection.” For believing in nothing—save his own secret omnipotence—Richard insinuates himself almost invisibly into the lives of his victims. Unburdened with the common sense conviction that language bears some essential relation to the world, to truth, Gloucester manipulates words with an unsettling ease. Even the “truth” that he was in fact the murderer of King Henry

becomes an element of the fiction which insidiously undermines Anne's pious resistance. Admitting his guilt, Richard nonetheless pretends to have done the deed out of love: "He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband / Did it to help thee to a better husband" (I. ii. 138-39).

Of course, Anne's revulsion for Richard is for the moment understandably whipped into a white heat; she spits at him and commands him to withdraw: "Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes" (I. ii. 148). But Richard has now drawn Anne precisely to that point where revulsion reaches its extremity and may begin, if carefully prompted, to spill over into its opposite. But if that is to occur, Richard must simulate genuine passion, and do it so well that he becomes pitiable.

Thus in the climactic passage of the scene, Richard narrates a moment out of his past in such a way as to invest his demonic fatality (that which Anne hates and fears) with a tragic hue (that which she may find piteous):

Those eyes of thine from mine have drawn salt tears,
Shamed their aspect with store of childish drops:
These eyes, which never shed remorseful tear—
(I. ii. 153-55)

Even when those hardened warriors—his father and Edward—wept at the death of Rutland, the youngest of the York brothers, Richard in his pride disdained to shed a tear. Not even the death of his own father, though it caused him sorrow, could wrest from his "manly eyes" a "humble tear." In short, Richard represents himself as a victim of his own pride. Beneath this cruel aspect, he seems to say, I have carried a lonely burden of loss and sorrow. But "what these sorrows could not then exhale / Thy beauty hath, and made them blind with weeping" (I. ii. 165-66).

When Richard concludes this solemn speech (of some eighteen lines in length) Anne is, for the first time, silenced. And behind that speechlessness lies the beginning of, if not love, then pity—and thus surrender to the power of Richard's supreme evasion. What had seemed bestial cunning and satanic malice in Anne's (and our) prior reading of Richard's character, may now be read anew as a mask behind which the true Richard suffered and longed for just such an opportunity to offer up his pride at the altar of love. So convincing is his performance at this point that even we, his intimates in deception, are half willing to believe it.

With regard to this transformation of Anne's response—one many critics have found implausible—the doctrines of one of Shakespeare's most notorious contemporaries, Giordano Bruno, may not be irrelevant. Though best known for his theory of infinite

worlds—which eventually brought him to the attention of the Inquisition—Bruno was in fact the foremost purveyor of gnostic doctrine in the Renaissance.¹⁸ One of the most important elements of Bruno's teaching was an erotic psychology—perhaps better termed an erotic magic—designed, with a cynicism astonishing even in the age of Machiavelli, to gain for its practitioner an unlimited power over others. In one late treatise, the *Theses de Magia*, Bruno anticipates Freud in identifying erotic energy as the raw force shaping all human behavior. The *Theses de Magia* is, in fact, a practitioner's manual for the manipulation of that raw energy. It demonstrates the means of creating the *vinculum*, or bond, which will able the magus practitioner to gain control over the will of his victim, and Eros is his tool:

All affection and bonds of the will are reduced to two, namely aversion and desire, or hatred and love. Yet hatred itself is reduced to love, whence it follows that the will's only bond is Eros. . . . As regards all those who are dedicated to philosophy or magic, it is fully apparent that the highest bond, the most important and most general, belongs to Eros; and that is why the Platonists called love the Great Demon.¹⁹

It should be apparent that Bruno is using the terms "love" and "Eros" synonymously; they represent simple raw desire. The job of the manipulator, or hunter of souls, is to remain detached from any real emotion, while nevertheless simulating the passion by means of which he hopes to control his victim. Such a manipulator, a skillful one like Richard of Gloucester, may transmute the Eros of aversion into the Eros of desire (or pity).

Indeed, Richard's manipulative technique so resembles the strategy counseled in Bruno's work that one may suggest, if not a direct influence, then at least an illuminating analogue. Shakespeare could not have been unaware of Bruno and his teaching, as Frances Yates and others have suggested.²⁰ Moreover, Bruno's *Heroici Furori* published in England in 1585 and dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, established a memorable precedent for Shakespeare's parodic treatment of the Petrarchan love lyric. For the sonnet sequence of which the *Heroici* is composed imitates Petrarch in a subversive manner, misreading the Italian poet's amorous conceits as emblems of gnostic liberation from the bestiality of the flesh. In the dedication to Sidney we find an attack upon Petrarch's idolatry of woman so virulently misogynistic that we must wonder whether, given the other parallels already noted, it may have inspired Shakespeare's conception of Gloucester. The poet who sighed for his Laura, Bruno writes, lacking the intelli-

gence to apply himself to higher things, cultivated a bestial idolatry, all for the sake

of these eyes, these ears, this blush, this tongue, this tooth, this hair, this dress . . . this little shoe, this sun in eclipse . . . this slut, this stench, this deathbed, this privy, this menstruation, this corpse . . . which, by means of a superficial appearance, a shadow, a phantasm, a dream, a Circe-like charm in the service of procreation, deceives us by taking the form of beauty.²¹

If the seduction of Anne offers us nothing so explicit as this, most readers would agree that a troubling undercurrent of hostility informs the scene—that is, a hatred of the flesh which takes woman as the emblem of all that is degrading in man’s creaturely status. Indeed, the seduction is immediately preceded by Richard’s suggestion of “another secret close intent / By marrying her which I must reach into” (I. i. 158-59)—words that in retrospect seem decidedly obscene. We may also recall in this context Richard’s encounter with Queen Elizabeth in Act IV when, replying to the Queen’s reminder that he murdered her children, he retorts that

. . . in your daughter’s womb I will bury them,
Where, in that nest of spicery, they will breed
Selves of themselves, to your recomforture.
(IV. iv. 423-25)

If the imagery here seems at first glance inviting, it is upon closer inspection grotesque. Moreover, it should be read within the context of a pattern of allusions throughout the play which depicts Richard as the “slander of [his] heavy mother’s womb” (I. iii. 230).²² The most telling is the lament of the Duchess of York herself:

O ill-dispersing wind of misery!
O my accursed womb, the bed of death!
A cockatrice hast thou hatched to the world,
Whose unavoided eye is murderous.
(IV. i. 52-55)

In short, Richard’s deadly career has been a repudiation of the life-giving goodness of the womb. Once alerted to this pattern of allusion, it is difficult to read the overture to Elizabeth cited above as anything other than maliciously ironic. For Richard as for Bruno, the womb is an object of fear and loathing, at once a burial and a breeding ground.

If Richard’s deepest desire is, as I have argued, the *gnosis*, or knowledge of his own omnipotence, then it may be reiterated that

the capture of Anne is not primarily a political maneuver, but rather an attempt to free himself from the threat of bondage. In short, the emblem of creaturely desire and dependence must be degraded if the gnostic manipulator is to avoid being himself "enchained" by Eros; that freedom is the guarantee of his control over the wills of others, and thus of the success of his evasion of grace—that is, of the possibility of redemption within time present. When Anne capitulates, Richard produces a sign of the bondage into which she has fallen. He slips a ring upon her finger: "Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger / Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart" (I. ii. 204-06). But, of course, the reverse is true. It is Anne who is encompassed by the insinuating web of fictions which Richard has spun—with a calculated spontaneity—out of the vacuity of an already negated present.

The scene closes with another of Richard's soliloquies, and we find him in an exultant mood of half-feigned astonishment at his victory over the hapless Lady Anne: "Was ever woman in this humor wooed? / Was ever woman in this humor won?" (I. ii. 227-28). But we must be cautious of his apparent candor; for he conceals as much as he reveals:

I'll be at charges for a looking glass
And entertain a score or two of tailors
To study fashions to adorn my body:
Since I am crept in fashion with myself,
I'll maintain it with some little cost. . . .
Shine out fair sun, til I have bought a glass,
That I may see my shadow as I pass.

(I. ii. 255-59, 262-63)

This is Richard's moment of sublime extravagance; the passive sufferer of the play's opening soliloquy has made good on his promise. Of special note is the subtle reorientation toward that crucial symbol, the sun. Before, Richard paid at least an indirect homage to a law higher than the self. His delight had been "to see [his] shadow in the sun / And descant upon my own deformity." Now, he audaciously commands the sun to shine so that, having bought a looking-glass, he may see only the restless passage of that shadow.²³ If the sun is the preeminent symbol of a "true" representation, of a world of real objects with meaning outside the confines of the self, then Richard in effect declares here his denial of that world. The looking glass, traditionally an image of self-knowledge—that is, of the knowledge of one's mortality—is here transformed into an image of imaginary self-creation. It captures only what Eric Voegelin, in a study of gnostic self-creation, has called "the flight from the self's non-essential facticity toward being

what it is not." The nature of the freedom it reflects is "the *necessity* of making a choice which will determine one's own being" (emphasis added).²⁴

For Richard, the "flight from the self's non-essential facticity" is a flight from the center of existential gravity that is the body, a flight into absolute difference or otherness. He aspires to the Throne under the mistaken conviction that absolute power, in the worldly sense, will guarantee the radical autonomy that is his deepest aim. But the Throne stands symbolically and existentially at the center of life, and the King—if rules successfully—must bind his will to the will of the people. He must attain their trust. Little surprize, then, when upon ascending the Throne, Richard immediately begins to falter and hesitate. Only when the forces of retribution begin to move against him does he become his old self again—full of "that alacrity of spirit" that he was "wont to have" (V. iii. 73). And in his final, doomed speech he reveals that nihilistic longing for the abyss that has been his guiding star from the beginning: "I have set my life upon a cast / And I will stand the hazard of the die" (V. iv. 9-10).

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Notes

¹Henry Hudson, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters*, 2 vols. (Boston: Ginn and Co.: 1872; rpt. New York: AMS Reprint 1973), pp. 149-150.

²Robert Ornstein, *A Kingdom for a Stage: The Achievement of Shakespeare's History Plays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 71.

³Marguerite Waller, "Usurpation, Seduction, and the Problematics of the Proper: A 'Deconstructive,' 'Feminist' Rereading of the Seductions of Richard and Anne in Shakespeare's *Richard III*," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 160.

⁴See, for example, Linda Bamber, *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1982); Margaret Ranald Loftus, "Women and Political Power in Shakespeare's English Histories," *Shakespeare Newsletter*, 30 (1980), p. 25; and Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (New York: Summit Books, 1981).

⁵Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958). See ch. 3, "Gnostic Imagery and Symbolic Language," pp. 48-99. Jonas' study remains the standard general work on ancient gnosticism and is especially interesting in suggesting the analogue with modernity which I have noted (see pp. 320-40). Others who have entered the dialog over the relationship between gnosticism and modernity include Eric Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (Chicago: Regnery Gateway, Inc., 1968); Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983); Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*, trans. Robert M. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987); and Gregor Sebba, "History, Modernity and Gnosticism," *The Collected Essays of Gregor Sebba*, eds. Helen Sebba, Anibal A. Bueno and Hendrikus

Boers (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1991). Of these the most cogent analyses are those of Voegelin and Blumenberg. The latter draws upon Voegelin's contention that modernity is best described as a reemergence of the gnostic worldview brought about by the break-up of the medieval synthesis. However, Blumenberg differs in arguing that modernity is in fact a "second overcoming of gnosticism." The point is debatable, but the present essay assumes the truth of Blumenberg's suggestion that Christianity absorbed, by way of Augustine and St. Paul, a hidden dualism never wholly overcome by subsequent theological development. That gnostic element, according to Blumenberg, is contained for the better part of the Middle Ages only to resurface with the advent of nominalism—especially with Ockham's speculations on the radical Otherness of God. This gnostic turn becomes operative across a wide spectrum of Christian experience as it is mediated, inadvertently, through the theologies of Luther and Calvin—particularly through their doctrines of the Hidden God and predestination. For an argument which lends some support to this position, see Paul Ricoeur, "Original Sin: A Study in Meaning," *The Conflict of Interpretations: Essays in Hermeneutics*, ed. Don Ihde (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974). For a discussion of the gnostic/Manichaean element in Luther's thought (and his followers), see Theobald Beer, *Der frohliche Wechsel und Streit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1980). Since a discussion of the mediatory role played by nominalism and Reformation thought in nurturing the gnostic influences permeating northern Europe in the sixteenth century would require lengthy treatment, I have passed over the problem. However, readers familiar with Reformation theology of election will immediately notice relevant parallels. A view which attempts to absolve Luther and Calvin of any gnostic "taint" is to be found in Philip J. Lee's *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987). However, Lee's treatment of modern gnosticism as essentially an anthropological concern—i.e. the emergence of the autonomous self—agrees with my own.

⁶William Shakespeare, *The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: The Viking Press, 1969); all subsequent quotations from the play will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁷Jonas, p. 51.

⁸Attributed to Valentinus by Clement of Alexandria in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto*. I have used Jonas' translation, *The Gnostic Religion*, p. 334.

⁹Jonas, pp. 334-35

¹⁰Georges Batailles, "Base Materialism and Gnosticism," *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 49.

¹¹Jonas, p. 87.

¹²"Lying Against Time: Gnosis, Poetry, Criticism," *Agon: Toward a Theory of Revisionism* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), p. 59.

¹³Bloom, p. 67.

¹⁴See Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, p. 424. Kantorowicz's study demonstrates how the figure of the king evolved from its early association with Christ's "royal priesthood" toward the complete absorption of the symbolism of the *corpus mysticum* formerly associated exclusively with the Church.

¹⁵I refer to Paul's advice to the Ephesians to "Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world against spiritual wickedness in high places" (6:11-12).

¹⁶See Calvin's remarks on Eve's temptation scene in *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1948) pp. 145-46.

¹⁷I am thinking particularly of the Mystery tradition still alive—albeit in a

much diminished form—in Shakespeare's childhood. One account of the Temptation was performed by the Grocers of Norwich in 1565. There the Serpent first approaches Eve with the following address: "O lady of felicity, behold me my voice so small!" See *The Creation of Eve, with the Expelling of Adam and Eve out of Paradise in Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas*, ed. John Quincy Adams (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 90.

¹⁸For an overview of the specifically "gnostic" element in Bruno's teachings see Stephen A. McKnight "Understanding Modernity: A Reappraisal of the Gnostic Element," *The Intercollegiate Review*, Spring (1979), pp. 107-17.

¹⁹As translated in Ioan P. Couliano's *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 91. Bruno's *Theses* and his *De Vinculum*, a crucial companion text, were composed in Latin in 1590-91. Neither have been translated into English to date. For the authoritative Latin texts see Jordani Bruni Nolani, *Opera Latine Conscripta*, vol. 3 (Florentiae 1893; rpt. Stuttgart Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromann, 1962).

²⁰For a brief summary of Bruno's work and travels, including his stay in England in the 1580's, see Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979). For the most recent discussion of Bruno's possible influence on Shakespeare, see Hilary Gati, *The Renaissance Drama of Knowledge* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 114-64. Gati makes no reference to *Richard III*, but he does make a convincing case for the availability to Shakespeare of several of Bruno's most important works and demonstrates an influence on *Hamlet*. It is unlikely that the Latin texts of the *Theses* made its way into England before Shakespeare composed *Richard III*, but the erotic psychology espoused there is already hinted at in earlier texts.

²¹This translation of the passage is from Ioan P. Couliano's *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance*, trans. Margaret Cook (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 68. For the full text, see *The Heroic Frenzies*, trans. Paul Eugene Memmo, Jr., *University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures*, vol. 50 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1964).

²²See also Margaret's curse at IV. iv. 47 and 54 and the Duchess of York's at IV. iv. 137-39.

²³I am indebted to Harold Bloom for this insight into the passage. See his introduction to *Elizabethan Dramatists*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986). To my knowledge, Bloom is the only other critic to have noticed the persistent undercurrent of gnostic imagery in the play.

²⁴Eric Voegelin, "The Eclipse of Reality," in *Phenomenology and Social Reality*, ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 185.

Richard In the "Amorous Looking Glass" by David Pollard

Shakespeare's *Richard III* is a comprehensive depiction of malaise—at once personal, familial, social, and political. It is as well, from the startling entrance of the titular character which opens the play, visually, and most obviously riveted to the imaging of deformity. Richard presents himself to his audience first as an optical grotesque, a disturbing anamorph, before he reveals to us any of the machinations of his soul. Marjorie Garber has traced the uncanny process by which the deformation of the historical Richard is advanced throughout the writings of the Tudor propagandists which lead up to and inform (Garber says "ghost write") Shakespeare's version.¹ Garber goes on to explore Shakespeare's powerful contributions to the defeaturing of this royal villain. What interests me, however, and what will be the focus of the following essay, is the psychological counterpart to Richard's deformity. In other words, I plan to look at just one scene in the play in order to examine a manifestation of this figure's psychosexuality. It is his excitingly perverse sexuality, to my mind, which helps to explain why Richard commands the engrossed attention of modern audiences. But to establish a sense of "modernity," I shall begin with a detour and contextualize my observations with reference to Baudelaire and Freud.

I.

Charles Baudelaire felt certain that the world was destined eventually to be swallowed up by boredom.² For the French poet, boredom ("ennui") was the enticingly delicate monster which announces a complex state of soul. A bored person may find himself deprived of an interest in life as he knows it, and turning inward, to his horror survey a vast corresponding emptiness. This "encounter with nothingness"³ reduces the bored person to a state of restless agitation, a mental anguish which Baudelaire calls "spleen"—the peevish sense that one is "le roi d'un pays pluvieux . . . impuissant, jeune et pourtant très-vieux." This condition can arise out of little or no commensurate pressure from external forces, for it is essentially endogenous. The splenetic individual suddenly observes in himself feelings of alienating difference, estrangement, and world hatred. His response is one of edgy hostility complicated by an apprehension of metaphysical absurdity. In short, he has the frustrating sense that there may be final truth in such a statement as the poet August von Platen's chillingly

succinct line: "Denn jeder sucht ein All zu sein, und jeder ist im grunde nichts."⁴

In *Les Fleurs Du Mal* Baudelaire addresses many poems to the anatomization of this affliction; many more poems record strategies for aesthetic escape. The feverish poet imagines flights to temporary paradises; he explores the delights of voyeuristic sex; and in several impressive poems (the "Tableaux Parisiens"), he engages in meditative people-watching on the streets of Paris. One deliverance from boredom, however, takes a more disturbing turn. "L'Heautontimoroumenos" ("The Self-Tormentor"), as the title announces, derives its inspiration from a play by Terence, and treats of self-activation by recourse to deliberate self-torment. The poem's subtext is that pain may supply meaning when meaning is otherwise lacking. The fretted speaker feels that he must lash out and abuse someone else. Thus he threatens to thrash his lover and make her cry in order that, like Moses striking the rock, he can turn his spiritual desert ("mon Sahara") into an ocean upon which to set sail for new psychological experiences. The woman's sobs promise to be like a drum which will sound the speaker's rush into the excitement of imaginary battle. Partly, the speaker wants to force the woman to recognize herself as tormentor by beholding in him a reflection of her own identity ("Je suis le miroir / Où la mégère se regarde!"). More importantly, he longs to see himself projected into *her* agony as a way of filling the inner blank with a self-image of some kind, however loathsome. The torture works, and the speaker receives his releasing epiphany:

Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
 Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
 Je suis les membres et la roue,
 Et la victime et le bourreau!⁵

Willfully accepting himself as source and most fitting recipient of clarifying hatred, Baudelaire's self-tormentor asserts triumphantly his morally marginalized status as nature's pariah: "Un de ces grands abandonnés."

Leo Bersani has discussed "L'Heautontimoroumenos" suggestively in terms of Freud's concept of sado-masochism. As Bersani insists, Baudelaire's poem presents one extended moment during which the erotogenic process of self-location through the abuse of another, self-proclaiming theatricalization, and preemptive self-castigation, are forcefully enacted. For reasons which will soon become clear, I would add that the poem's shocking mimesis connects thoughts that its author had mulled over darkly in his intimate journal: "When I have inspired universal horror and disgust, I shall have conquered solitude. . . . As for torture, it has

been devised by the evil half of man's nature, which is thirsty for voluptuous pleasures. Cruelty and sensual pleasure are identical like extreme heat and extreme cold."⁶ Poised on these values, "L'Heautontimoroumenos" riots in an exultant exhibition of determined moral ugliness. And this quite clearly implies a strange, collusive ligature of relationships among author, text, and audience.

Freud regarded sado-masochism as an anomalous challenge to the overriding supremacy of the pleasure principle. At first Freud thought that sadism was one of the primary instincts; later changing his mind, he speculated that perhaps masochism was primary in that it derives directly from the powerful death instinct.⁷ In both formulations Freud considered the sadistic and masochistic impulses to be convertible. In addition, when one instinct is transformed into its opposite, Freud found that the process was always attended by a sense of guilt. The guilt is to be understood as activated by an awareness of the sexual nature of both impulses. For example, masochism is in essence a "punishment for [a] forbidden genital relation" with the father and in fact its "pleasurable substitute."⁸ Instructively, Freud brackets sado-masochism with scopophilia-exhibitionism as parallel examples of how instincts may revert to their antithesis. In such a reversal, claims Freud, the "passive aim (to be tortured or looked at) has been substituted for the active aim (to torture and to look at)."⁹ Masochism becomes the same as sadism, only "turned round upon the subject's own ego," fired by an accompanying libidinal delight. Freud goes on to make an intriguing observation about the reconvertibility of these instincts: "Where once the suffering of pain has been experienced as a masochistic aim, it can be carried back into the sadistic situation and result in a sadistic aim of inflicting pain, which will then be masochistically enjoyed by the subject while inflicting pain on others, through his identification of himself with the suffering object."¹⁰ This formulation, it seems to me, helps us to assign the place in the sado-masochistic loop where the psycho-dynamics of Baudelaire's poems are located. Both the poem and Freud's ideas, furthermore, provide the frame within which we can take note of certain aspects of the personality of Shakespeare's Richard III.

III.

Shakespeare's interest in the psychology of self-torment is virtually coterminous with the history of his art. The Shakespearean canon is crowded with a variety of tormented-and-tormenting characters, including Hamlet, Iago, Macbeth, and Leontes. Like these later figures, his siblings as it were, Richard is a narcissist,

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self-absorbed to the point of solipsism. Shakespeare had already established Richard's inflexible commitment to self-sufficiency in *3 Henry VI*:

I have no brother, I am like no brother;
 And this word 'love', which greybeards call divine,
 Be resident in men like one another
 And not in me! I am myself alone!

(V. vi. 80-84)¹¹

This self-enclosure is a persistent, unqualified facet of Richard's character, and, consequently, even on the eve of his death he can still protest: "Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I" (V. iii. 183). Loving and being are one convertible transaction which posits subject and object as interchangeable terms, to the exclusion of any possible third. Richard's aspiration is therefore to achieve that totality of being which von Platen claims is humanity's deep desire.

Like the Baudelairean "heautontimoroumenos" with his spleen, Richard is restless and easily bored, and this is what makes him the frightful enemy of a "weak piping time of peace." At the outset of *Richard III*, bereft of military imbroglio, the title character encounters the return of the repressed—the monstrous agenda set for him at birth. He announces:

I . . . am . . .
 Cheated of featured by dissembling Nature,
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
 Into this breathing world scarce half made up,
 And that so lamely and unfashionable
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them.

(I. i. 18-23)

Freud singled out Richard III as an example of what he termed the "exceptions to his theory." The "exception" is one who imagines himself (with or without justification) as in some way handicapped by nature and consequently entitled to special status and special behavior. The "exception" looks for compensation, a way of asserting himself even as he exacts some form of retribution against the world. Interestingly, Freud paraphrases the motivation behind the opening soliloquy in the following way: "Nature has done me wrong in denying me that beauty of form which wins human love. Life owes me reparation for this, and I will see that I get it. I have a right to be an exception, to overstep the bounds by which others let themselves be circumscribed. I may do wrong myself, since wrong has been done to me."¹² The business of *Richard III*, on the psychological level, becomes, one might say, the

gradual, step-by-step projection of the title character's grievance into the world in the form of various kinds of disfiguring action. Should the world bear his stamp, then Richard has paid Nature back in kind. In other words, Richard is the avenging hero-villain whose offending adversary is Nature herself.

Richard is Shakespeare's first study in intense misogyny. Richard's hatred and contempt for women derive from the primal unreliability of his mother, the Duchess of York. In the play we get glimpses of a lifetime of rejection by his mother because of his deformity. The Duchess openly denominates this son as the "shame" of her "accursed womb." We are left to infer a childhood of irremediable and, therefore, repressed misery, when we hear of Richard's youth as reconstructed by the Duchess, albeit in justified anger:

Thou cam'st on earth to make the earth my hell.
 A grievous burden was thy birth to me;
 Tetchy and wayward was thy infancy;
 Thy schooldays frightful, desp'rate, wild, and furious;
 Thy prime of manhood daring, bold, and venturous;
 Thy age confirmed, proud, subtle, sly, and bloody.
 (IV. iv. 167-72)

Rather obviously Richard's behavior has been that of a rejected child; as a consequence, subverting all feminine qualities in himself, he has identified with the image of manliness (that is, aggression and destructiveness) as bodied forth in his ruthless father. Therefore, not surprisingly, Richard sees all women as multiple versions of his mother: unreliable vessels of "dissembling Nature" who serve to cripple men sexually even as they divert their political strength. We see this attitude at work, most especially, in Richard's views of Queen Elizabeth and her hidden rival, Mistress Jane Shore.

For Richard, his brother Edward IV stands as the antitype of masculinity, debilitated by uxoriousness and a fatuous dependence on his mistress. As Richard explains to Clarence, the king's unreliability stems from Queen Elizabeth's influence: "Why, this it is when men are ruled by women" (I. i. 62). Thus, in a bizarre way, Richard is able to assume the role of spokesman for traditional values when he turns his malice on the queen and of peddling influence on her relative's behalf. Richard's contempt for Elizabeth ("my Lady Grey") is a constant factor in his strategy to discountenance Edward's decadent court; furthermore, his contempt is validated in the event, in so far as Elizabeth accedes to his shameless suit for her daughter's hand. Richard judges: "Relenting fool, and shallow, changing woman!" (IV. iv. 431). In addition,

Mistress Jane Shore, that great unspoken presence in the play, serves Richard's purposes twice over. First, Richard libels his royal brother by pointing to the latter's affair with Shore's wife as a sign of undisciplined debauchery. Later, Richard isolates and then disposes of Hastings by accusing this loyalist to the king of consorting with the woman responsible for the withering of his arm. In charging Jane Shore with witchcraft, Richard links the royal mistress with his mother as co-responsible for his condition as Nature's disfigured victim.

IV.

One of the most freakish scenes in all of Shakespeare, the encounter with Lady Anne (I. ii), furnishes Richard with a brief but grimly effective opportunity to play the Baudelairean lover. Richard's "courtship" of the Lady Anne, as he tells us, is motivated by political design. However, we are compelled to admire his audacity and willingness to endure possible rebuff. Heroic intrepidity is a hallmark of his character. He has about him the sort of resilience which the poet Lucan attributed to Julius Caesar: *vulnere virescit virtus* (his manliness flourishes by being wounded). A woman's resistance, therefore, constitutes little challenge for Richard; more saliently, it allows in him for the release of complex libidinal energies. Earlier Richard had acknowledged that he was not "made to court an amorous looking glass" (I. i. 15). He had also reduced courted women dismissively to "wanton ambling nymph[s]." As an expression of his exceptionalism, therefore, Richard presents himself to Anne under extremely melodramatic circumstances. As an indicator of the true terms of alliance, the corpse of Henry VI, murdered by Richard himself, is the centered visual signifier. And yet this occasion admits of a strangely magnetic sexuality.

The dynamics of this scene, I suggest, are those of sadomasochism. Richard launches his attempt at domination by encircling Anne with a preposterous tale of wooing. He explains his previous history of carnage by insisting that he was driven by libido:

Your beauty. . . did haunt me in my sleep
 To undertake the death of all the world,
 So I might live one hour in your sweet bosom.
 (I. ii. 122-24)

She in turn recoils with predictable horror: "Thou dreadful minister of hell"; "thou lump of foul deformity"; and "diffused infection of a man." As the verbal vehemence heats up, so does the level of sexual tension. In the classic Olivier film, as Lady Anne, Claire

Bloom's gestures and gaze catch this very well. Anne's language of hostility and abhorrence changes to action when Richard advances towards a proposal of marriage. "He that bereft thee, lady, of thy husband, / Did it to help thee to a better husband" (I. ii. 138-39). As the stage direction informs us, "[*She*] spits at him." The language now escalates to another plateau of manipulative cross-purposes:

Anne. Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes.
Richard. Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine.
Anne. Would they were basilisks to strike thee dead!
Richard. I would they were, that I might die at once.
 (I. ii. 148-51)

Then, handing her the phallic sword, Richard melodramatically assumes the posture of one of his own military victims. Again, the stage direction gives the necessary sign: "*He lays his breast open. She offers at it with his sword.*" At this point, it seems to be, with spit on his face and a sword at his throat, Richard has found his version of the "amorous looking glass." Anne's resentment and transgressive anger are now a reflection of his own. She is the spiteful mirror in which the energized narcissist views himself.

Lady Anne drops the sword, however, and there follows a transference of roles. Morally incapable of playing Richard's part, Anne slides into the passive, masochistic attitude which Freud thought more characteristic of women than men. Correspondingly, Richard becomes the vigorous sadist. We recall that Freud had insisted on the convertibility of instincts. Thus, as he proceeds to crush her resistance, Richard beholds in Anne a victim of unnegotiable contingencies. With keen delight he presses his advantage:

Richard. But shall I live in hope?
Anne. All men, I hope, live so.
Richard. Vouchsafe to wear this ring.
Anne. To take is not to give.
 [*Richard puts the ring on her finger.*]
Richard. Look how my ring encompasseth thy finger,
 Even so thy breast enclouseth my poor heart.
 (I. ii. 199-204)

The ring, obvious counterpart to the sword, is symbolic of Richard's view that woman is to be enclosed and incorporated into a male dominant *egoisme-a-deux*. Accordingly, it really establishes the opposite of what is stated in the last line. Now in control, Richard absorbs Anne into a relationship which turns on the necessarily bracketed roles of tormentor-and-tormented, sadist-and-masoch-

ist, beholder and beheld. Anne now unwittingly speaks Richard's language ("To take is not to give"). And later, despite her protestations, she has no life outside the circle of Richard's narcissism. We hear that she shares in the nightmare world of his bed (IV. i. 82-86). She then is rumored to be sick unto death. And finally, with chilling ambiguity, King Richard acknowledges to himself her demise: "Anne my wife hath bid this world goodnight" (IV. iv. 39). We get one last glimpse of her as fully appropriated into the unconscious mind of her husband when she appears to him in the turbulent nightmare before Bosworth field (V. iii. 160-64). As a psychological reflector, therefore, Lady Anne is as thoroughly abused and then disposed of as the woman in the poem by Baudelaire.

V.

Was ever woman in this humor wooed?
Was ever woman in this humor won?

(I. ii. 227-28)

I wish to conclude with some speculative remarks. In the lines just cited Shakespeare, I think, beckons to his audience through the voice of Richard to share, with whatever ironic qualifications, in his sardonic judgment. Anne is indeed hopelessly weak-willed; thus the second scene of act one of *Richard III* presents a bravura performance for both the dramatist and his macho puppet. For clearly the lines suggest that Richard has enjoyed in a voyeuristic way the psychological violence that stems from his own spleen. Such pleasure stands as part of his compensation for being an "exception." In reality, of course, it has been the artist who has tortured Lady Anne; Shakespeare's also are the unseen hands which force the ring upon her finger in fatuous and degrading subjection. Shakespeare has scripted the misogyny of the "exception's" entitlement, quite the way Puccini composes the sadistic deaths of his heroines to ravishing music. To his great credit, Baudelaire had the honesty to admit that the male artist is always the primal self-tormentor who creates through his fictions a means of exhibitionist escape from isolation at the risk of raising a universal horror. The depiction of Richard with Lady Anne, allowing for differences of culture and individual artistic temperament, permits the conjecture that here Shakespeare is in prophetic agreement with the French poet. Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, of which *Richard III* is an exemplar, constitutes, after all, one of the most violent and transgressive bodies of work in Western civilization. It is supremely a theatre of cruelty. Therefore, Act I, scene

i of Shakespeare's play can be read as an exotic flower of evil. We, the audience, on the other hand, are invited to partake in its exciting pathology. *Our* instincts might be healthily repressed or sublimated under compulsion from the reality principle. Nevertheless, as Freud suggests, all men think of themselves in some sense as "exceptions" who have been somehow or other maltreated. Consequently, inevitably, the Lady Anne scene will evoke an inner kinship of alienation with Richard—a secret and closely guarded "bond of fellowship which constrains us to sympathy with the miscreant."¹³ Therefore, audience members might not shrink from this scene's perversity. Rather, the action is calculated to release in us the energies of any latent misogyny: we are free to delight in our own scopophilia as we vicariously identify with Richard's remorseless and cynical courtship. The vicariety of art allows us to indulge in aesthetically pleasing sado-masochistic fantasies of our own. Shakespeare's scene thereby can become the focusing instrument for a complex and collusive "communal" aggression involving, as it does, author, fictional character and audience alike. Ethically speaking, the only possible justification for experiencing such dramatic action is whatever clarifying catharsis it might momentarily effect. The likelihood is, however, that the clarification we attain will induce something like self-loathing—as with Baudelaire and (one fancies) Shakespeare himself.

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Notes

¹Marjorie Garber, "Descanting on Deformity: *Richard III* and the Shape of History," *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (New York: 1987), pp. 28-51. See also Madonne M. Miner, "'Neither Mother, Wife, nor England's Queen': The Roles of Women in *Richard III*," *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare*, eds. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 35-55. Miner's essay is a study in how the women of *Richard III* progress from bickering to camaraderie and stresses the strength of the women characters. While sympathetic to Miner's point of view, my approach takes a somewhat different tack.

²Most of Part II derives from my essay "Iago's Wound," *Othello: New Perspectives*, eds. Virginia Mason Vaughan and Kent Cartwright (Rutherford, New Jersey: 1991), pp. 89-96.

³Reinhard Kuhn, *The Demon at Noontide: Ennui in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), p. 13.

⁴"For each man tries to be a universal whole, and every man is at bottom nothing at all." *The Penguin Book of German Verse* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 1980), p. 322.

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⁵Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Oxford, England: 1980), p. 78. "I am the wound and the knife! / I am the buffet and the cheek! / I am the limbs and the rack, / Both the victim and the executioner!" (translation mine).

⁶Leo Bersani's book is *Baudelaire and Freud* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977). See pp. 92-94 and 100-05. The citation from Baudelaire comes from *Intimate Journals* (San Francisco, California: 1988), pp. 37 and 64.

⁷Sigmund Freud, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* [1920] (New York: 1961), pp. 48-49.

⁸Freud, "A Child is Being Beaten" [1919], *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love* (New York: 1963), p. 117.

⁹Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" [1915], *General Psychological Theory* (New York: 1963), p. 91.

¹⁰Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," p. 93. See also in the same volume "The Economic Problem in Masochism," pp. 190-201.

¹¹All quotations taken from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1974).

¹²Freud, "Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work" [1916], *Character and Culture* (New York: 1963), p. 161.

¹³Freud, "Some Character-Types Met with in Psychoanalytic Work," p. 161.

Representing the Other: *Othello*, Colonialism, Discourse by Walter S. H. Lim

*Othello*¹ is a tragedy about power played out at the level of ethnic relationships. Unlike Lear, Hamlet, and MacBeth who are native to their respective societies, Othello is not a native of Venice. *Othello* is a tragedy centered on the black man's crisis of identity. Shakespeare's tragic protagonist discovers he must confront the fact that he will always be foreign to the Venetian state that he serves. Caught in a colonial world in which he is inscribed as an ethnic alien, Othello cannot define satisfactorily his human and social identity. Set apart by skin color from a white society, he cannot bridge the cultures of Venice and Africa—he is destined to be a fractured subject because of his race. Shakespeare's tragic portrayal of Othello is particularly interesting because his play alludes to social texts and understandings of Africans available in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England. More than creating dramatic interest by portraying the black man as a spectacle of difference, Shakespeare's play engages in dialogue with a people's cultural perception of Africans, a perception shaped chiefly through travel literatures and edicts regulating the deportation of blacks from England. Any performance of *Othello* would elicit from its audience a response colored by cultural bias. Shakespeare's play cannot be read apart from a consideration of such bias. *Othello* is a relentlessly social play, caught up and engaged in a discourse of race relations found present in Elizabethan England. By portraying his tragic protagonist as a fragmented subject caught between two worlds, Shakespeare ratifies existing cultural biases even as he complicates the discourse of colonialism by dramatizing the destructive energies of evil in the tragedy.

I.

Othello is ironically a black general directly responsible for ensuring the security and stability of a white society. On his able leadership and military prowess depend the defense and security of the Venetian state. Shakespeare presents Venetian society as one defined by order. When Brabantio gets extremely upset over the marriage of his daughter to Othello, the Duke and the Venetian senators ensure that Othello and Desdemona get a fair hearing. In that hearing, the Duke concludes that Brabantio's "son-in-law is far more fair than black" (I. iii. 290). Skin color is not the register

of a person's moral state and condition. Interestingly, in spite of the Duke's enlightened view of Othello's blackness, the equation of white with purity and black with moral degeneracy and racial inferiority forms part of the discourse of Venetian culture.

For Brabantio, Othello's significance is limited to his position as an employee of the state. Othello's marriage to Desdemona is seen as overstepping the rights of a man in that position. Indeed his relationship with Desdemona is bound up with metaphors of intrusion—a black alien has transgressed the space of Brabantio's domestic world, the symbolic center in which purity of race and culture is maintained and preserved. We need to remember that this center is not confined to Brabantio's home, but to a larger public space occupied by such characters as Iago and Roderigo. If Brabantio makes sense of miscegenation by accusing the Moor of practicing black magic, Iago responds to it by invoking images of copulating animals. Iago tells Brabantio: "Even now, very now, an old black ram / Is tuppung your white ewe" (I. i. 88-89); shortly after, he says: "your daughter, and the Moor, are now making the beast with two backs" (I. i. 115-16). Iago's discourse reduces human sexuality to the level of the depraved and animalistic. It is significant that Iago is obsessed with the subject of lechery, for this perspective that defines all human sexuality as lust and the gratification of desires arouses Othello's anxieties.

From the start then, Othello has already been defined ineradicably as the ethnic and cultural alien. Othello believes, or at least thinks he believes, that the substantive value of the "services" (I. ii. 18) he has rendered the rulers of Venice will serve to protect him against Brabantio's enmity. From Othello's point of view, performing his duty as a general marks his loyalty to the state; even more importantly, it is bound up with his need to be an integral part of Venetian society. But there are people in Venetian society convinced that Othello can never be a part of white culture because he is black. One of them is Brabantio who establishes race as the determinant of a person's position in society. Iago articulates a version of this perspective when speaking of his relationship to Othello: "I follow him to serve my turn upon him. / We cannot be all masters, nor all masters / Cannot be truly follow'd" (I. i. 42-44). Since not everybody can be masters, something must be done to undermine the unequal relationship between Iago and Othello in the military ranks. The only way to do this is to destroy Othello's domestic life, which in turn will lead to the disintegration of his public life as a servant of the state. In dismantling Othello's domestic life, Iago also asserts the power he enjoys as a member of the dominant culture. The antagonism toward miscegenation, indignation at not being given a lieutenancy, and hatred of the

ethnic Other are all given vent in what is remarkably an effortless manipulation of Othello. Part of Iago's ability to manipulate Othello with such ease can be traced to his recognition that Venice's great general harbors deep-seated anxieties about his place and identity in Venetian society.

Iago's distrust of racial mingling and his preoccupation with Desdemona's union with Othello is echoed interestingly in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century texts, one of the most trenchant of which is Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (probably written in 1596). In Spenser's *View*, a character by the name of Eudoxius responds in disbelief to the assimilation of English people into Irish culture and life: "And is it possible that an Englishman brought up naturally in such sweet civility as England affords could find such liking in that barbarous rudeness that he should forget his own nature and forgo his own nation?"² Shakespeare's Brabantio confronts Othello with a language that resembles Eudoxius' in a striking way:

Damn'd as thou art, thou hast enchanted her,
For I'll refer me to all things of sense,
[If she in chains of magic were not bound]
Whether a maid, so tender, fair, and happy,
So opposite to marriage, that she shunn'd
The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
Would ever have [to incur a general mock]
Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
Of such a thing as thou?

(I. ii. 63-71)

Iago wants to believe that the unnaturalness of miscegenation will fracture Othello's and Desdemona's conjugal bliss: "It cannot be that Desdemona should long continue her love unto the Moor. . . . When she is sated with his body, she will find the error of her choice; she must change, she must" (I. iii. 342-53). Where Iago's distrust of miscegenation is bound up with his desire to undermine the Moor's authority in Venetian society by inscribing Othello in a caste-bound cultural system, Irenius in Spenser's *View* elaborates on the effects of mingling between different races and peoples to negate and annihilate Irish identity. The concern with ethnicity so central to *Othello* is played out in equally intense terms in Spenser's *View*, so that both works provide useful contexts for elucidating each other's use of contemporary England's discourse of race relations. In *A View* Irenius, Spenser's spokesman for empire, responds to Eudoxius' queries about the laws, customs, and social practices of Ireland by elucidating the origins of the Irish people. In Irenius' account, the Irish do not possess an identifiable ethnic or national identity. The origins of the people who have come to

be known as the Irish are lost as a result of different ethnic interactions. Spenser's *Irenius* gives an elaborate account on the impurity of the Irish race. Tracing their ancestry to the Scythians (whom Spenser equates with the Scots), the Irish have intermingled racially with the Spaniards, Gauls, Britons, and Saxons. The interminglings that took place between English and Irish did not result in improving the Irish. Instead they led to the assimilation of English families of high station into Irish life and culture. Adapting Irish culture and ways, these English families became barbaric. Spenser negates Irish identity when he suggests that there is no such thing as a Celtic speaking people. In order to reinforce this absence of identity, Spenser proceeds to argue that there is no such character as a real Spaniard. If the Spaniard is ethnically indistinct, then the ineluctable logic follows that the condition of ethnic impurity is exacerbated for the Irish who intermingled freely with the Spaniards in its early history.

Spenser's *Irenius* is like Shakespeare's *Iago* who shapes the text of the ethnic Other according to his own view of cultural difference. For *Irenius*, miscegenation destroys Irish identity even as it makes barbaric those English who assimilate themselves into Irish society. Shakespeare's *Iago* possesses a similar distrust of miscegenation. For *Iago*, the heathen/Christian union that constitutes *Othello's* identity, like a mixed marriage, generates and embodies a state of chaos. Once again, *Iago's* view of *Othello* as the embodiment of chaos resembles Spenser's view of the Irish. Spenser's *Irenius* finds the Irish completely impervious to acculturation and civilization just as Shakespeare's *Iago* responds to *Othello* as a barbarian. *Iago* tries to prevent the chaos generated through miscegenation by reinforcing as powerfully as possible a social order in which the hierarchy separating master from servant remains sacrosanct. To preserve this order of hierarchical relationships, *Iago* labors to dismantle *Othello* and *Desdemona's* racial mingling. He makes *Othello* accept the colonial point of view that blackness signifies an unnatural ontological condition. Because this perspective contradicts *Othello's* perception of his position in Venetian society, the general finds himself confronted with a crisis of identity. Shakespeare dramatizes this crisis by having *Othello* live in a Christian Venice. To be part of that society involves embracing and assimilating its Christian values and ethos; and so significantly, *Othello* responds to the orchestrated altercation between *Cassio*, *Roderigo*, and *Montano* by asking angrily, "Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that / Which heaven has forbid the Ottomites?" (II. iii. 161-62). *Othello's* response to the tumult sets up a dichotomy between the Christian world of order and "propriety" (II. iii. 167) and the pagan world of disorder and chaos.

Othello appropriates the language of the dominant Venetian culture when exercising his military responsibility: this language imposes moral valuations on peoples different from the Venetian. Similarly, when Iago professes to Desdemona that he speaks the truth in his assessment of women's resistance to definition and comprehension, he says, "Nay, it is true, or else I am a Turk" (II. i. 114). Given Iago's own equation of Turkishness with falsehood and duplicity, we are called upon to view him as a Turk when he destroys Othello and Desdemona. At the close of the tragedy, Othello draws an analogy between himself and "a malignant and a turban'd Turk" (V. ii. 354). The central significance of Othello's defence of Venice's security against the encroaching Turks is not related to the Moor's military prowess. Rather it is located in the value systems Othello accepts and defends in his capacity as general. These values can be described as fundamentally Christian.

Shakespeare's Othello reinscribes a Venetian/Christianized identity onto his (repressed) African self. Working within the Judeo-Christian framework that separates light from darkness because they are opposing essential principles, he wages war on the forces of chaos antagonistic to moral good and social order. He wins the battle against the Turks and embodies the strength and stability of Christian Venice. The chaos and absence of order Othello associates metonymically with the Turks is an interesting reversal of writings that emphasize the lack of discipline of Christian soldiers when pitted against the infidels. In *The Arte of Warre* (1591), William Garrard and Robert Hichcock ask: "if the infidels observe such strict discipline, why should not we that be Christians indeuour our selves to surpassse them."³ In *Anima'dversions of Warre* (1639), Robert Ward, for example, writes:

this mighty Army of the Turkes were so well governed, that no quarrells, mutinies, nor distractions was ever seene, nor heard through the whole Army, but low and soft speeches; Alwayes both evening and morning recommending themselves, their safeties and prosperous successe of their actions to their God; The consideration of this should make us that are Christians, if not surpassse, yet equall them in such laudable actions.⁴

In *Othello* it is the black general who governs and fights well; the Christian warrior embodies discipline and regimentation. Yet in spite of Othello's authority as the security of Venetian society and custodian of its cultural (Judeo-Christian) values, the threat posed by the Turks at Cyprus is not one that Venice can afford to be complacent about. The shame and terror that the Turks have brought on Christendom must not be reenacted at Cyprus. After

Othello implies that the victory at Cyprus owes to Christian discipline and Turkish chaos, he starts his descent into a world of turbulence and concludes by drawing an analogy between himself and the Turk. Othello ultimately makes sense of his tragedy in terms of the interpretative strictures offered by the dominant culture. By associating himself with the Turk to describe his own situation at the end, Othello reveals that he is unable to divorce himself from the basic Venetian construction of social and cultural identity, one predicated on positing the evil nature of the pagan Other. The Turk that Othello perceives to be distinct and separate from himself is inscribed indelibly in his identity as Venice's cultural and ethnic Other. Othello is what Jonathan Dollimore calls "a domesticated foreigner."⁵ He learns finally that, as such a foreigner, he can never affirm and ground his identity in a white and Christian society.

Shakespeare portrays Othello as a man who is never, or can never be, confident of his position in Venetian society. Iago succeeds in destroying Othello because he recognizes and manipulates the Moor's anxieties. He reminds Othello that he is black and therefore different; that is enough to unhinge Othello's perceptions of his social and cultural identity. That Iago finds it easy to undermine the Moor's emotional stability reveals that Othello can never fully obliterate his African self when he fabricates his Venetian/white identity. If Othello desires to set himself up as a *tabula rasa* that will inscribe all the values of Venetian culture, his tormented reactions to Iago's insinuations point to the impossibility of fashioning an entirely new identity that annihilates ethnic and cultural roots. Othello's desire to be such a *tabula rasa* constitutes a fantasy of beginnings that involves negating originary identity. When he accepts Iago's cultural understanding that a black man can never compete with a white man in obtaining a white woman's love, he reveals not only his anxieties about his African identity but registers this anxiety as a colonial construction. Ironically, Othello's desire to be constituted as a Venetian results in his acceptance of Iago's perceptions of ethnic difference.

Both Othello and Iago invoke nature as a central determinant of ethnic and racial affinities and affiliations. For Iago, nature is a binding force that always brings men and women of one race together. Desdemona is seen by Brabantio and Iago as having undermined a basic law of nature when she enters into marriage with a black man; her ability to do so is viewed as unnatural. Significantly, Iago tells Roderigo that after Desdemona has satisfied her lust and "the blood . . . made dull with the act of sport, . . . *very nature* will instruct her to it, and compel her to some second choice" (II. i. 225-34; italics mine). Here Iago invokes

nature in a double sense—first, because Desdemona’s love for the Moor is unnatural, it cannot be sustained for long and a purgative function will operate as a matter of course; second, Desdemona, who will give her affections to another man after satisfying her lust for Othello, is following the instincts of her *nature* as a whore. Iago suggests that Desdemona’s love for Othello registers “a will most rank” (III. iii. 236). In other words, her actions contradict nature’s basic law opposing miscegenation.

Othello himself registers deep anxieties in relation to miscegenation. It can be argued that in expressing the unnaturalness of miscegenation, Iago simply reinforces an uncertainty and anxiety already entertained by Othello himself. Othello is then Iago’s victim and the subject of racist hate even as he makes possible the destructive power of that hate. Iago’s statement to Othello—“I am your own forever” (III. iii. 486)—resonates with suggestions of Othello’s complicity in materializing Iago’s dark designs. Othello is implicated in the evil embodied in Iago because he takes the initiative to make Iago his own. The definition of his real identity of course plagues Othello throughout the play. When Lodovico enters to apprehend Desdemona’s murderer and demands “Where is this rash and most unfortunate man?” (V. ii. 284), Othello responds: “That’s he that was Othello; here I am” (V. ii. 285). Othello separates the Moor who was Venice’s trusted general from the heathen Other who had just committed a hideous murder. The Othello who stands accused of his wife’s murder embodies the darkest fears that characters like Brabantio and Iago have of the black man.

The complex relationship existing between victimization and complicity in the tragedy is expressed through shared frames of reference, narrative doublings, and symbolic mirrorings that Shakespeare employs to portray Othello and Iago. Iago and Othello, for example, both invoke the Turk as a metaphor for the alien Other who represents all the values antithetical to Christian Venice. Because both Othello and Iago are identified with the Turk within the symbolic and ethical economies of the play, who is indeed the real Other becomes a complicated question. When Iago says to Roderigo—“Were I the Moor, I would not be Iago: / In following him, I follow but myself” (I. i. 57-58)—the chiasmic configuration of his utterance enforces Othello’s and Iago’s interchangeable identities. In the first line, Iago appears to be saying that if he were Othello, he would want to be removed as far away as possible from the Venetian heart of darkness. He also suggests that if he were in the Moor’s position, he would have no reason to execute these dark designs because he would be in possession of Desdemona and a powerful military position. The line—“In following him, I follow

but myself"—has the effect of conflating Iago's identity with Othello's. If in following Othello, Iago is in fact following himself, then evil is also located in the play in the ethnic Other.

This sinister conflation of identities is bound up with the effects of assimilation. The price Othello pays for assimilation into white culture is his transformation into the agency through which the patriarchal and colonial values of Venetian culture get enacted and materialized. Patriarchy demands punishment for the transgressing whore, the name it bestows on the woman it cannot define, and colonialism fights against the Turk as the ethnic and cultural Other. And this of course is the violent irony of Othello's need to be assimilated into Venetian society. Fashioning a Venetian identity by striving to obliterate, if possible, the African self relegates originary identity to the place of the Other. That Othello does not want to recognize himself in this place of the Other does not mean that this Other does not exist. Even as Othello works diligently to fulfill his duties and legitimize his social identity as Venetian general, he finds that the discourse of the Other emerges at deep moments of stress, getting entangled with the discourse of the dominant culture he has assimilated. We see this most powerfully exemplified when Desdemona's inability to explain the loss of her handkerchief finds Othello speaking in the language of the Other, registered symbolically in his narrative's generic fluidity. Listening to Othello's narrative, the reader, like Desdemona, no longer occupies the solid narrative space of Venetian reality but a murky realm in which fact and fiction become blurred.

Othello. That's a fault: that handkerchief
 Did an Egyptian to my mother give;
 She was a charmer, and could almost read
 The thoughts of people; she told her, while she kept it
 'Twould make her amiable, and subdue my father
 Entirely to her love: but if she lost it,
 Or made a gift of it, my father's eye
 Should hold her loathly, and his spirits should hunt
 After new fancies: she dying, gave it me,
 And bid me, when my fate would have me wive,
 To give it her; I did so, and take heed on't,
 Make it a darling, like your precious eye,
 To lose, or give't away, were such perdition
 As nothing else could match.

Desdemona. Is't possible?

Othello. 'Tis true, there's magic in the web of it;
 A sibyl, that had number'd in the world
 The sun to make two hundred compasses,
 In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;
 The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk
 And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful

Conserve of maidens' hearts.

Desdemona. I'faith, is't true?

Othello. Most veritable, therefore look to't well.

Desdemona. Then would to God that I had never seen it!

(III. iv. 53-75)

Desdemona's "Is't possible?" and "I'faith, is't true?" reveal her inability to decipher the generic status of the narrative Othello has just unfolded. While the earlier exotic rendition of his adventures attracted Desdemona to Othello, his story of the magic handkerchief strains credibility. When Desdemona reacts to Othello's affirmation of the truth of his narrative by saying she wishes she had never seen the handkerchief, a wedge is inserted between Desdemona's and Othello's conceptual and perceptual universes. Desdemona cannot comprehend why the loss of a handkerchief, if in fact it is lost, can provoke such a violent response; Othello, on the other hand, sees nothing beyond the implications of Desdemona's inability to produce the handkerchief. Incanting "The handkerchief!" three times in a ritualistic affirmation of his perceptual myopia, Othello also establishes irrevocably for himself Desdemona's sin of infidelity.

Othello's conviction that Desdemona has cuckolded him disrupts his emotional and mental equilibrium. If this conviction is made possible by Iago's insinuations and Othello's anxieties, it is also shaped by certain cultural codes inscribed in the Venetian world. In addition to the powerful fear of racial and ethnic inequities, Othello is also influenced and shaped by Venetian culture's perceptions of love, perceptions that have their roots in a recognizably Judeo-Christian tradition. The play's invocation of doctrines found in Christian orthodoxy registers itself in the literal as well as symbolic antagonisms transpiring between Christian Venice and the pagan Turks. Othello himself associates the state of chaos and disorder with the Turks. Shakespeare also portrays Othello and Desdemona's responses to love and passion against the immense backdrop of commentaries and exegeses on marriage produced by and defining Christian orthodoxy. Central to these beliefs are a deeply-entrenched distrust of eroticism and the relegation of the wife to a position of secondariness within the conjugal economy. Shakespeare's Othello inherits these aspects of Christian orthodoxy when he assimilates the values of Venetian culture. The Judeo-Christian structures informing Othello's anxieties concerning human sexuality reveal the influence exerted by the discourse of cultural difference permeating Venetian society. Othello accepts what Stephen Greenblatt calls "the colonial power of Christian doctrine over sexuality,"⁶ defining the private and domestic space of his relationship with Desdemona against the

structures of authority and submission this expression of Christian orthodoxy encodes. Othello is caught between enjoying the gratification of sexual desires and longing for release from those desires. Greenblatt also argues suggestively that the fracture between gratification of desire and the instinct to be freed from desire is encoded in Othello's need to find "calmness" (II. i. 185) after the storm of erotic passion and Desdemona's possession of an exuberant and proliferating sexuality. Desdemona's sexuality comes into tragic conflict with Othello's, for in addition to symbolically devouring up his discourse and thus undermining the primacy of male authority which control over narrative implies, Desdemona also threatens to subvert the order of gendered hierarchy institutionalized in Christian orthodoxy.⁷ Othello's need to preserve the sanctity of the conjugal bed is conditioned and influenced by the view that marriage is sacred. In seventeenth-century England, this view gets itself expressed through the Puritan idealization of marriage; linked directly to this idealization is the rigid legislation of sexual behavior in those places where the Puritan ethic gained cultural dominance. Both Iago and Othello exercise scrutiny over human sexuality in their obsession with Desdemona's fidelity to the conjugal bed. When Othello takes upon himself the responsibility of killing Desdemona, he exacts a punishment England passed into law in 1650. In that law, adultery was punishable by death, legalizing the penalty that Othello imposes on Desdemona for her transgression.

Fueling Othello's anxieties then is a theological system that defines physical nature and desires as radically evil and the *damnosa hereditas* of the Fall. That is why Othello tells us that he can love Desdemona only after she is dead and embalmed in the state of perfection. Othello nurses the fantasy of recuperating the prelapsarian condition in his demand for a pure and unblemished Desdemona, a fantasy that can only be expressed in the postlapsarian world as necrophilia. Shaped and influenced by Venetian culture, Othello finds himself unwittingly forced to negotiate the theological niceties separating sacred from profane love, and failing to do so with tragic results. When Desdemona threatens Othello's fundamentally Christian conception of sacred love with her exuberant sexuality, she comes into conflict with the institutional structures created by the Church to legislate morality and order. In doing so, she inadvertently critiques the society legitimizing these structures. Interestingly and significantly, Desdemona embodies a version of the chaos of uncontrol that Othello fears tremendously and that he has to contain at all costs. Othello, the general who defends Venice against the pagan Turks at Cyprus, ends up punishing the transgressing woman in his own

society in a symbolic affirmation of his role as the custodian of an ethical system identified with Christian orthodoxy. In the arraignment of Desdemona, Othello resembles the inquisitor when he accuses Desdemona of adultery. Desdemona's protestations of innocence infuriates Othello, because she interrogates the sanctity of the quasi-ecclesiastical space he operates within and legitimizes. Othello explains his premeditated murder of Desdemona by invoking its positive effects. Desdemona's death prevents men from being cozened and transformed into cuckolds. But more importantly her death, analogized as a sacrifice made for the good of men in society and the world, parodies by inverting the drama of salvation in which God sacrifices his Son for the world.

In *Othello*, Shakespeare goes to some length to enforce the point that Othello is caught in a society that defines itself in Christian terms. Othello's rout of the Turks at Cyprus, his view of human sexuality, and his language all reveal that he has absorbed the Christian roots of the culture he lives in. It is this powerful desire for assimilation that ironically gets Othello absorbed into Venetian culture's ethics of marginalization and exclusion. By fighting against the Turk as the cultural Other and punishing Desdemona as the transgressing whore, Othello accepts an ethical system founded on exclusivity, a system that operates theologically as well as socially by defining a cultural center in relation to as well as over and against the existence of the (un)ethical Other. In order to preserve and protect the sanctity and inviolability of this system, Othello resorts to violence—he routs the Turks and murders Desdemona. In executing violence on the bodies of the Other, he carries the destructive logic of an exclusivist ethics to its logical conclusion. Inscribed inexorably in Venice's ethical system, Othello creates the conditions possible for his own dismantling. Venice has empowered a black general, himself the cultural and ethnic alien, to defend the sanctity of the system. What results is the destruction of the individual who becomes the agent through which the evil energies of a society are actualized.

Othello elicits from its readers very different and complex responses. First, the play presents Othello as a victim of the evil Iago, but this victimization does not negate characteristics in the protagonist that contribute to the tragic outcome. Othello's free and open nature is one that Iago recognizes he can manipulate and reconstitute. That Iago can reveal so openly the functionings of his colonial mindset compels the reader to consider the associations Shakespeare makes between Othello and the cultural Other who is the subject of colonization. It is after all Othello's incredible inability to discern at any level whatsoever Iago's dark designs that leads to the murder of Desdemona. Desdemona is the neces-

sary sacrifice made not only to ensure man's well being, but to allow Othello to confront the deep fissures operating within his own psychic economy. Othello cannot finally deny Emilia's accusation that he is "a devil" (V. ii. 134). Shakespeare's tragedy calls attention to Othello's vulnerability and gullibility, characteristics that identify him as Venice's ethnic and cultural alien.

Othello is a tragic protagonist absorbed by the subject of his identity. But unlike Lear, Hamlet, and Macbeth who agonize over man's place in the universe, Othello interprets his identity in relentlessly social terms. Othello does not interpret the events that have transpired in his life in cosmic terms. The play does not give him narrative space to meditate on existential questions. It portrays instead his malleability in Iago's hands in relation to the context of the racial and ethnic biases present in Venetian society. He responds instead to his tragic mistake of murdering Desdemona by using the language he knows best, the language of cultural relationships. Shakespeare's Othello is defined by language and the identity language bestows. At the end Othello views himself as both Turk and Venetian. According to the logic of the analogy and metaphor he invokes, Othello the cultural Other kills the Venetian, who happens also to be himself. The convergence of the Venetian and the Turk in the person of Othello points to the social identity in which he is caught up inexorably and defined tragically.

Shakespeare highlights Othello's dilemma of being caught between two cultural systems in the stories that he tells. In the narrative that wooed Desdemona, for example, Othello significantly depicts himself venturing, like a white traveller, in the midst of monstrous races. This narrative is particularly ironic because Othello ventures among races to which his origins can be traced by virtue of his blackness. His account of the peoples and creatures he encounters in his travels resembles Sir Walter Raleigh's *The Discovery of the large, rich, and beautiful Empire of Guiana*, one written to inspire England's colonial ambitions.⁸ In his *Discovery*, Raleigh tells his reader that there is no reason for him to disbelieve accounts given of the nation of people who lived along the Caura—the Ewaipanoma who had heads growing beneath their shoulders, eyes in their shoulders, and mouths in the middle of their breasts. Raleigh imagines not only the Ewaipanoma but also the Amazons. By invoking Mandeville's literature of his travels and defending their factual status, Raleigh situates himself in relation to a distinct tradition of travel narrative. Such travel narrative aroused tremendous interest because they represented the exotic and the fantastic. Raleigh invokes the exotic in a narrative in which he fashions his identity as a liberator of the native from Spanish imperialism and tyranny. He tells the king of Aromaia that he is an

emissary of a great monarch and comes to bring deliverance. Raleigh recognizes that the colonial enterprise depends on possessing knowledge of the cultural Other; and so, he significantly asks the king of Aromaia about the state of Guiana, the structure of the commonwealth, its mode of governance, and the identity of its friends and enemies. Raleigh shows pride in the way he proceeds to win the trust of the native and informs his reader that wealth is ample reason to fuel England's colonial ambitions.

If we invoke Raleigh's *Discovery* to contextualize the presence of colonial tropes in Shakespeare's tragedy, we can say that Othello assumes the identity of a colonialist when he recounts the exotic places and peoples he encountered in his travels. His stories of slavery and adventure rehearse legends and myths of black Africa found in such popular works as Mandeville's *Travels*, which was included in the first edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1589). The irony implicit in Othello's assumption of this colonialist identity lies in the fact that he belongs by race to the marginalized Other. This irony is deepened by the refusal of Othello's tragic narrative to provide a conclusive answer concerning the facticity or fictitiousness of the exotic stories recounted by Othello. The ambiguity of the status of these stories shows Othello shaped by the colonialist assumptions of Venetian culture even as it questions the reliability of Othello's perceptions of reality. In the latter, Othello is either a character who enjoys creating fictions or actually believes in them to the extent that he accepts their factual status. Whichever it is, Othello's penchant for creating incredible stories registers his difference from Venetian society. If these incredible stories captured the attention of Desdemona, they also reveal Othello's psychology to Iago. Iago recognizes accurately that Othello can be "tenderly . . . led by the nose" (I. iii. 399), because he is naturally gullible ("a free and open nature" [I. iii. 397]) and also because he creates narrative fictions and then believes in them. Othello's gullibility proves his undoing as the colonial-minded Iago obtains his complete trust and confidence in the same way that Raleigh procures the trust of the Aromaian king. To a colonial explorer like Raleigh, the ability to intersperse imaginary narratives in a text designed primarily to underwrite England's imperial ambitions is an implicit privilege. For the reader of the *Discovery*, it is not important whether Raleigh believed in the existence of the Ewaipanoma, the Amazons, or El Dorado. These exotic figures and places exist in Raleigh's narrative to increase excitement and wonder so that England will seriously consider entering into and colonizing the unknown. Like Raleigh, Shakespeare's Iago reads the cultural Other as a text—defined, limited, and ripe for exploitation.

Iago's view of Othello represents one response to the presence of the cultural alien—he is a subject to be exploited and subjugated. There is another response that I will describe as wonder, represented by Desdemona. When Desdemona falls in love with Othello for the stories that he tells, her response reenacts at the domestic level European wonder at beholding the New World. The wonder expressed by Desdemona of course runs the risk of not having expectations match up with reality. The disintegration of Othello's trust informs the reader that the anxieties embedded in miscegenation were not recognized by Desdemona. In loving Othello, Desdemona was attracted to the exoticism he represents. If Iago demonstrates from the very start an uncanny grasp of the functionings of power between the dominant culture and the marginalized Other, obliterating any space for the experience of wonder, Desdemona never deviates from wonder into cynicism and distrust. She does not participate in the ambivalent response of the colonial power to the wonders of the New World, a response shaped by the need of a Judeo-Christian ethic to demonize cultural difference and render suspect experiences of the sensual. Resistant to this culturally embedded ambivalence toward otherness, Desdemona represents a love that transcends cultural difference. Unfortunately Desdemona dies maintaining that love. Her death, which recalls Brabantio's and Iago's violent distrust of miscegenation, questions her wisdom of falling in love with Othello.

II.

Brabantio and Iago are not the only ones who have difficulties responding to Othello and Desdemona's love. Later readers of the play have also reacted to Shakespeare's portrayal of Othello and Desdemona with ambivalence. In 1693, for example, Thomas Rymer found that Shakespeare was not racist enough. In "A Short View of Tragedy," published in that year, Rymer found the play problematic because Shakespeare gave his protagonist a name, made Othello a general, and allowed him to marry "the Daughter and Heir of some great Lord or Privy-Councillor."⁹ He concluded that "Nothing is more odious in Nature than an improbable lye; And certainly never was any Play fraught like this of *Othello* with improbabilities."¹⁰ Rymer, who used the word "moor" interchangeably with "blackamoor," finds Shakespeare's dramatization of Othello as a spectacle of blackness absurd. Approximately eighty-nine years separated the first performance of *Othello* from the publication of Rymer's "A Short View of Tragedy." In these decades, the slave trade became systematically entrenched as an institution, so that by the time Rymer wrote, the relationship

between the black and the slave is a social fact. A little more than a century after Rymer's text appeared, Samuel Taylor Coleridge made the following observation on Othello's color in his notes on Shakespeare (1818): "as an English audience was disposed in the beginning of the seventeenth century, it would be something monstrous to conceive this beautiful Venetian girl falling in love with a veritable negro. It would argue a disproportionateness, a want of balance, in Desdemona, which Shakespeare does not appear to have in the least contemplated."¹¹ To Coleridge, Othello could only have been a Moor (as opposed to a blackamoor) because aesthetic wholeness was fractured if Shakespeare had actually dramatized the union between a black man and a beautiful Venetian woman. Coleridge worked with racist assumptions when he exonerated Shakespeare of the terrible charge of sanctioning miscegenation. He conveniently took care of any hint of Shakespeare's dramatic "improbabilities" (to borrow Rymer's phrase) by saying that Othello is not a *negro* but a *Moor*.

Both Rymer's and Coleridge's response to Shakespeare's representation of Othello point to a deep ambivalence inscribed at the center of this drama of race relations. In *Othello*, Shakespeare made use of his audience's awareness of blacks in England to create dramatic interest.¹² By staging the black man as the protagonist of tragedy, Shakespeare produced a play that foregrounded his central character as a spectacle of difference. More than simply existing as a general of a different skin color from the citizens of the state he serves, Othello crystallizes all the ambiguities of a man of different ethnic origin. Shakespeare's audience lived in an age in which knowledge of blacks was made available through direct encounters, travel literatures, and myth. These sources indicate that at the time Shakespeare produced *Othello*, blacks were already marginalized in various ways—through deportation, transformation into symbolic currencies of exchange and stereotyping.

If we turn to English history for a moment, we discover that a solitary black magician had been employed early on in the courts of Henry VII and Henry VIII. In 1555, the first group of black Africans was brought to England by John Lok, the son of a prominent London merchant and alderman; although these five Africans were referred to as slaves, they were clearly borrowed and not bought. 1555 was also the year in which Richard Eden published, along with his translation of Peter Martyr's *Decades*, the first two accounts of English voyages to Africa: Thomas Windham's voyage to Guinea in 1553, and John Lok's voyage to Mina in 1554-55.¹³ It was in 1562-63 that John Hawkyns acquired at least 300 inhabitants of the Guinea coast; Hawkyns was the first Englishman to traffic in black slaves for profit. If Elizabeth revealed a prejudicial view of

blacks in her royal edict of 1601, that attitude can be traced all the way back to the early days of her reign. Elizabeth had lent Hawkyns the use of a 600-ton vessel, the *Jesus of Lubeck*, for his second slave-hunting voyage of 1564-65. Although an organized slave trade would only take place some 100 years after Hawkyns's slave-trafficking, early dabblings in the trade had brought African slaves to England from the 1570's onward. Although no evidence can be found for black people being bought and sold in England until 1621, it is quite possible that the bartering of human bodies had taken place before then. Black people constituted a recognizable presence in England when Shakespeare wrote and produced *Othello* (probably 1604). Peter Fryer tells us that in the sixteenth century, blacks served as household servants (the majority), prostitutes or sexual conveniences for well-to-do Englishmen and Dutchmen, and court entertainers in England. Blacks also found themselves inscribed mythically in texts, translated into terms that satisfied popular craving for the exoticism that defined much travel literature of the period. More than providing entertainment and a glimpse into the larger world beyond England, this textual inscription also led to the construction of images of the cultural Other—natives were depicted as one-eyed Cyclop-like monsters, lust-craved beasts, and eaters of human flesh. Given their "natural" state and condition, it was only logical for the peoples of a "civilized" culture to bring nurture, knowledge, and enlightenment to the heathens.¹⁴

The colonialism Iago embodies differs in practice from the one Prospero represents, for Iago is content to let the ethnic Other remain forever incarcerated in his state of essential depravity and inferiority. Iago does not entertain hopes of civilizing the Other. The culturally and ethnically inferior Moor exists simply to be exploited. Prospero exploits Caliban in *The Tempest* but, unlike Iago, he first attempts to incorporate "this thing of darkness" (V. i. 275)¹⁵ into his own European culture. Caliban's inability to absorb and assimilate the language of his master confirms his savage nature and ontological Otherness. The debate between art and nature intrinsic to Shakespeare's dramatization of Caliban's resistance to the acculturating effects of language invokes Montaigne's assertion that nature is more infinitely vigorous than art because it is directly tied to life. "It is not reasonable," writes Montaigne in "On Cannibals," "that art should win the honours from our great and mighty mother nature."¹⁶ Here one encounters a view opposed to Sidney's conception that nature's "world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden."¹⁷ Sidney asserts that poetic and artistic creation finds its analogy in the divine act of creation. In Montaigne's view, the native is untainted and un-

marred by the artificial modifications in which European culture thrives. If the native is wild, he is wild like the spontaneous growth found in the natural world. Montaigne's nature is superior to art—the native's wildness is linked directly to nature. If Montaigne distinguishes *natural* man in the native from *artificial* man in the European, and finds the first to be intrinsically and essentially superior, Shakespeare's Iago never questions the cultural status of the non-European Other. If Prospero's colonialism involves first attempting to assimilate the savage into higher European culture, enacting Montaigne's observation that "we all call barbarians anything that is contrary to our own habits,"¹⁸ Iago's colonialism offers no space for attempting any such integration.

If Iago had problems with racial integration, so did Elizabethan England. On 11 July 1596, Elizabeth I sent an open letter to the lord mayor of London and his alderman, and to the mayors and sheriffs of other towns expressing her displeasure at the great number of "Negars and blackamoors" that are crept into the realm.¹⁹ Blacks create social embarrassments by becoming idle and poor when they are in need of work. The Privy Council responded to Elizabeth's displeasure by ordering that "the ten blackamoors that were brought in by Sir Thomas Baskerville in his last voyage shall be transported out of the realm."²⁰ Almost immediately following this order for deportation, the Lord Mayor of London and other public officers were required to assist Mr. Casper van Sanden, a Lubec merchant, send away from England "so many blackamoors" in exchange for eighty-nine of the Queen's subjects released from imprisonment in Spain and Portugal. Mr. van Sanden, a Lubec merchant, had purchased the release of these prisoners "at his own charges."²¹ Elizabeth I categorized blacks as currency that could be exchanged for subjects of real value. According to Elizabeth, "Negars and blackamoors" cause "great annoyance of her own liege people, that want the relief [i.e. food], which those people consume, as also for that the most of them are infidels, having no understanding of Christ of his gospel."²² The queen's view that blacks cause great annoyance to her proper and rightful subjects because they are infidels inscribes a discourse of cultural difference in both the social text and the dramatic text.

In addition to the view that blacks caused social embarrassments in England, and the general perception that they were less valuable than whites, lack of understanding of genetics also produced a literature that attempted to explain the phenomenon of blackness. In his *Discourse*,²³ reprinted in a substantially cut version in the 1600 edition of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations*, George Best writes about the responses of different peoples to warm and

cold climates, concluding that skin color has no direct correlation to climactic conditions. If proximity to the sun does not affect one's skin color, then there must be another reason to account for the phenomenon of blackness. For Best, blackness is an ontological state, related to the spirit and to morality.²⁴ Best's description of Africa as "a cursed, dry, sandy, and unfruitfull ground" owes to the account given of the fallen world in Genesis. Blackness, like original sin that is passed on inherently and indelibly from parent to offspring, can be traced to disobedience and rebellion, re-enacting at a later time in human history the theological fall in paradise.²⁵ "Thus you see," concludes George Best, "the cause of the Ethiopians blacknesse is the curse and naturall infection of blood, and not the distemperature of the Climate."²⁶

At the time that Best's *Discourse* appeared and Shakespeare produced *Othello*, that is during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, blacks were defined by their exoticism and their mythic roles; as "spectacles of strangeness,"²⁷ they appeared in texts for dramatic and exotic purposes. The dramatic and the exotic, however, cannot be divorced from the ideological. As we have already seen, Elizabeth I's attitude toward blacks had registered early on the literal and symbolic marginalization of a race because of social and economic realities. "Blackamoors" belonged not only to the representational world of drama, confined to the semiological boundaries of the playhouse; they were inscribed in the text of English society as expandable currency and exotic manifestations. As long as blacks do not grow into a sizeable group that threatened the economic situations of white working people, they could rest more or less peaceably in the mythic texts in which they were defined. I call these texts *mythic* because sixteenth-century England's knowledge of Africa was derived secondhand from popularized translations of tales of classical writers and contemporary accounts of sailors who had themselves seen Africa. Eldred Jones tells us that the publication in 1660 of John Leo's *The History and Description of Africa* in English could be taken as a major landmark in the spread of knowledge of Africa in England. The proliferation and popularity of literatures on Africa coincide with what Peter Fryer perceives to be the presence and development of hostile attitudes toward blacks in the latter half of the sixteenth century. A different social scenario is constructed by Karen Newman who finds that, although there were blacks who worked as servants in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England, there were others who owned property, paid taxes, and went to church. It was only with the establishment of the sugar industry in the Caribbean, and the tobacco and cotton industries in America, that the value of blacks as slave labor was fully recog-

nized and exploited. By the late seventeenth century, the English had come to recognize the significance of the slave trade to the British economy and newspapers advertised slaves for sale as well as notices seeking out runaway slaves.²⁸

III.

Fryer and Newman differ in their readings of the position of blacks in late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England, but they agree that perceptions of cultural difference that will later assume the form of a systematic slave trade were present at the time Shakespeare produced *Othello*. Iago's colonial consciousness shares affinities with existing views and treatment of blacks in Elizabeth's England. Shakespeare's dramatization of *Othello* elicits responses to representations of the exotic that are unavoidably shaded by social perceptions of ethnic difference. Desdemona and Iago represent two different responses to the spectacle and experience of this difference. There is finally a third response, one represented by Emilia and the shocked Venetians. Emilia is convinced that *Othello* is the devil while the Venetians are surprised at the gap that apparently separates the able general from the erring Moor. Shakespeare's play concludes with a powerful portrait of the protagonist as victim of the evil Iago and as the author of his own tragedy.

In *Othello*, Shakespeare meditates on the conflicts tormenting the foreigner in European society. His tragic protagonist is a fragmented subject who is ironically the victim of a villain who does not himself possess a center or self. This explains in part why it is so difficult to decipher the motive forces energizing Iago's destructive instincts. If Jonson's *Volpone* shows that revelling in the infinite capacity to transform the self reduces the subject to a subhuman grotesque,²⁹ Shakespeare's tragedy dramatizes how the decentered self serves the interests of colonialism and power. Iago does not represent decentered being but embodies the intoxicating thrill of possessing the uncanny ability to manipulate others. Iago recognizes from the start that he belongs to a race that enjoys cultural precedent over the black general. Because he enjoys this privileged position of belonging to the dominant culture, Iago is free to manipulate the unstable social position of the Other. When he succeeds in destroying *Othello*, he points to the presence of a harsh social world in which the ethnic alien can never belong without being dismantled by tensions and anxieties. Shakespeare's *Othello* is the fragmented subject because he is caught in and defined by culture and society. He is black and different, and that difference is what makes possible his tragedy—from Iago's ma-

nipulations of his trusting nature to his own anxieties about his relationship to Venetian society. By tracing Othello's tragedy to the racial dynamic functioning within a particular society, Shakespeare invokes the tensions, anxieties, and ambivalences latent as well as operative in his own society.

Othello's allusion to the presence of blacks in Shakespeare's England complicates the meanings generated in any performance of the play. For portraying the black man by capitalizing on his identity as a spectacle of difference ratifies cultural stereotyping. To have Brabantio's misgivings and Iago's knowledge of racial difference materialize in the complete unhinging of the Moor suggests that certain prejudicial perceptions held by a society are in fact accurate. But even as this is one level on which the play enacts its tragedy, Othello's dismantling is orchestrated by a colonial consciousness that constitutes the play's focus of evil. Because Othello is a victim, the blame for the tragedy does not fall squarely on his shoulders. Ultimately, the most distinctive feature in *Othello*, when we compare it to Shakespeare's other great tragedies, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*, must surely be the assimilation of any philosophical consideration, like the nature of Iago's evil, into the discourse of race relations. Inscribing all the ambivalences found in representing ethnic Otherness and in eliciting audience responses to spectacles of cultural difference, this discourse connects Shakespeare's tragedy to the social prejudices and practices that make possible theatrical performances.

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Notes

¹William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. M. R. Ridley (London and New York: Methuen, 1958). All citations of the text are to this edition.

²Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. W. L. Renwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 48.

³William Garrard and [Robert] Hichcock, *The Arte of Warre. Beeing the onely Rare Booke of Myllitarie Profession* (London, 1591).

⁴Robert Ward, *Anima'dversions of Warre; or, A Militarie Magazine of the Truest Rules, and Ablest Instructions, for the Managing of Warre* (London, 1632).

⁵Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 156.

⁶Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 242.

⁷For Greenblatt's argument that Othello's response to the erotic and ecstatic moment is marked by ambivalence, by the rift between embracing the erotic as gratified desire and viewing it as fraught with dangers, see *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, especially pp. 242-44. Greenblatt tells us that Othello embraces the

erotic as a supreme form of romantic narrative, and Desdemona's vision of unabating sexuality threatens to undermine Othello's exercise of total control over his narrative. This anxiety of losing control over Othello's narrative is linked to the subversion of masculine authority encoded in the economy of Christian marriage. Greenblatt also provides a brief account of commentaries and theological views on confession, adultery, and institutional hostility to desire, three motifs central to *Othello*, on pp. 246-52. For a sustained and elaborate study of the relationship between sexual attitudes in the early modern period and the inherited tradition of exegetical readings of the opening chapters of Genesis, read James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

⁸Sir Walter Raleigh, *Selected Writings*, ed. Gerald Hammond (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1984), pp. 76-123.

⁹Thomas Rymer, "A Short View of Tragedy," in J. E. Spingarn, ed., *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908-09), vol. 2, pp. 222-23.

¹⁰Rymer, "A Short View of Tragedy," vol. 2, p. 223.

¹¹Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1914), p. 386.

¹²Here, a qualification of Shakespeare's perception of the relationship between Moors and blacks is necessary. In *Othello's Countrymen*, Eldred Jones tells us that Shakespeare made use of available information on the character of Moors to delineate Othello. Eldred Jones also argues that Shakespeare could hardly have been confused about the difference in color between Moors and blacks: see *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), p. 22. But while Shakespeare gave Othello characteristics of the Moor, he also made Othello black. Othello himself tells us that he is black (III. iii. 267) and other characters in the play refer to the blackness of his skin. Given Shakespeare's designation of Othello as a Moor and also as a black man or "blackamoor," it should come as no surprise that readers have difficulty determining Othello's precise African identity. I propose that Shakespeare was less interested in defining this identity than in representing Othello as a spectacle of Otherness. An actor in Shakespeare's day playing Othello would most likely conceive of him as a "blackamoor," a designation the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "A black-skinned African, an Ethiopian, a Negro; any very dark person." The *Oxford English Dictionary* also gives the following definition of "Moor": "In *Ancient History*, a native of *Mauretania*, a region of North Africa corresponding to parts of Morocco and Algeria. In later times, one belonging to the people of mixed Berber and Arab race, Muslim in religion, who constitute the bulk of the population of North-western Africa, and who in the 8th c. conquered Spain. In the Middle Ages, and as late as the 17th c., the Moors were commonly supposed to be mostly black or very swarthy (though the existence of 'white Moors' was recognized), and hence the word was often used for 'Negro'."

¹³See Jones, *Othello's Countrymen*, pp. 8-9. Jones tells us that Eden refers to the peoples of North and West Africa as moors, while he refers to the peoples of Guinea as black moors, Ethiopians, or Negroes (p. 10). There is awareness in the latter half of the sixteenth century in England concerning the difference between the moor and the blackamoor.

¹⁴For a history of the black presence in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, read Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People*

in *Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), chs. 1-3. I am grateful to Dr. Nathan Godfried for bringing this book to my attention.

¹⁵William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (London and New York: Methuen, 1954).

¹⁶Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. J. M. Cohen (Suffolk: Penguin Books Ltd., 1958), p. 109.

¹⁷Sir Philip Sidney *A Defence of Poetry*, ed. Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 24.

¹⁸Montaigne, *Essays*, p. 108.

¹⁹See Fryer, *Staying Power*, pp. 10-11.

²⁰G. B. Harrison, *A Second Elizabethan Journal: Being a Record of Those Things Most Talked of During the Years 1595-1598* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1931), p. 109.

²¹Harrison, *A Second Elizabethan Journal*, p. 111.

²²Cited in Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 12.

²³I am indebted to Karen Newman for drawing my attention to George Best's *Discourse* in "'And Wash the Ethiop White': Femininity and the Monstrous in *Othello*," in *Shakespeare Reproduced: The Text in History and Ideology*, ed. Jean E. Howard and Marion F. O'Connor (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 146-48.

²⁴Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*, ed. Walter Raleigh, 12 vols. (Glasgow James MacLehose and Sons, Publishers to the University, 1903-05), vol. 7, pp. 261-62.

²⁵Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, vol. 7, pp. 263-64. Leo Africanus' popular *Historie of Africa* (1526) also locates the origins of blackness in Noah's son Chus. For a brief survey of how the Moor came to be associated with blackness and sin, see Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Louisiana: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 1-17.

²⁶Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations*, vol. 7, p. 264.

²⁷Newman, "'And Wash the Ethiop White'," p. 154.

²⁸Newman, "'And Wash the Ethiop White'," pp. 153-55.

²⁹Thomas Greene has described *Volpone* as one of the greatest essays on the ontology of selfhood in *The Vulnerable Text: Essays on Renaissance Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 194-217.

**“O monstrous world”:
Shakespeare’s Beast with Two Backs
by William Collins Watterson**

Iago’s shocking image in I. i. 116 of Othello and Desdemona *in delicto* (“your daughter, and the Moor, are now making the beast with two backs”)¹ has been traced to Book I, chapter iii of *Gargantua*, where Rabelais describes the giant’s parents, Grangousier and Gargamelle, as frequently making *la beste avec deux dos*. Another possible source, however, is a famous portrait medallion by Giovanni Cavino (1500-70) commissioned by the Paduan philosopher Marcantonio Passeri. Cast in bronze, it depicts on the reverse side a single grotesque figure with two heads, four arms, and four legs (fig. 1), a figure which, like the image in Rabelais, ultimately derives from Aristophanes’ parable of androgyny in the *Symposium*. The motto which accompanies the image, *Philosophia Duce Regredimur* (“Philosophy leads by going backwards”), contains a moral paradox of the kind favored by Renaissance Platonists, even as it proclaims Passeri’s own marked preference for the wisdom of the ancient Greeks. This object sheds light not only on the line by Iago already quoted, but on the moral character of Iago and Othello, on Iago’s dream narrative in III. iii, and on the climactic stage business which punctuates Othello’s suicide.

Grotesque enough to make a memorable impression even in the course of a single viewing, the image on the reverse side of the Cavino medal represents the mythic creature invented by Aristophanes in the *Symposium* to account for the present strife between man and woman. The comic playwright recounts:

In the first place, the sexes were originally three in number, not two as they are now; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature; this once had a real existence, but is now lost, and the name only a name of reproach. In the second place, the primeval man was round and had four hands and four feet, back and sides forming a circle, one head with two faces, looking opposite ways, set on a round neck and precisely alike. . . .²

A threat to the gods because of their strength, these creatures were eventually humbled by Zeus, who in Aristophanes’ account diminishes their power by cutting them in half. Though possessed of different natures, the three kinds of creatures subject to Zeus’ surgery—“man,” “woman,” and “man-woman”—subsequently go

about “desiring their other half, eager to throw their arms about one another to grow [back] into one.”³

Because Shakespeare refers to Socrates by name only once—in II. i of *The Taming of the Shrew*—the extent of his familiarity with the dialogues of Plato in general and the *Symposium* in particular must remain a matter of speculation. Moreover, the pervasive influence of Florentine Neo-Platonism on Elizabethan literature is such that one can never be sure whether one is hearing an echo of the *Symposium* and/or a Renaissance commentary, or of a topos or poetic commonplace. Even so, Oscar Wilde long ago argued for the *Symposium* as a source for the sonnets in his whimsical “Portrait of Mr. W. H.” and contemporary scholars⁴ have concurred in all seriousness. Novy⁵ suggests that in *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare draws on Aristophanes’ fable in his depiction of the androgynous twins, Viola and Sebastian, and indeed the former disguised as Cesario refers to herself as a “poor monster” (II. i. 35) as she contemplates the impossibility of any kind of union with Orsino. On the other hand, Orsino’s expression of surprise at the sight of an identical brother and sister—“One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons / A natural perspective, that is and is not! (V. i. 216-17)—resembles even more closely Ovid’s description of the mythological lovers Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*: “when their limbs met in that clinging embrace the nymph and the boy were no longer two, but a single form possessed of a dual nature, which could not be called male or female, but seemed to be at once both and neither.”⁶ It may be that Ovid himself had the *Symposium* in mind when he wrote the preceding passage.

Learned Renaissance writers were capable of distinguishing between the image of the hermaphrodite of the *Metamorphoses* and the two-backed beast of the *Symposium*. As Roche⁷ has shown, the medieval tradition of allegorizing Ovid had made the former (fig. 2) into a Christian symbol of wedded concord by the time Spenser employed it in the *Faerie Queene* (1590). The hermaphroditic embrace of Scudamour and Amoret in the stanzas which conclude Book III, therefore, is unlikely to have shocked Lord Burleigh, even though the former’s displeasure has sometimes been posited as the reason for the passage’s disappearance from the 1596 edition. Spenser, who knew Christianizing commentaries on the *Symposium* by Ficino and Piccolomini,⁸ seems to have followed the syncretistic logic of Leone Ebreo, who argued in his *Dialoghi d’amore* that Aristophanes’ fable of androgyny was itself merely “translated” from *Genesis* (“male and female he created them”). By the time Shakespeare composed *Macbeth*, a year or two after *Othello*, the androgyny of the Weird Sisters with their beards and skinny

chopped lips creates a context in which to view Macbeth and Lady Macbeth as "unnatural" fragments of some ungendered mythic whole. "Full of the milk of human kindness," Macbeth in his wife's words lacks the "ornament of life" which is the crown/phallus. In her wish to be "unsex'd," she in turn craves potency and masculine *sang froid*. What in the comedies is a playful motif—the construction of gender as a function of difference—becomes sexual nightmare as Shakespeare accommodates Aristophanes' parable to tragedy.

Shakespeare's representation of the beast with two backs as a "monster" in *Othello* invites systematic "platonizing" of the text. The Moor, while expressing displeasure at Cassio's drunken misconduct, equates rebellion with the original severing of the "man-man" creature in Aristophanes' parable: ". . . he that is approv'd in this offence / Though he had twinn'd with me, both at a birth / Shall lose me. . . 'Tis monstrous, Iago, who began't?" (II. iii. 211-17). After hearing Iago's intimation of adultery, Othello sees the "tupping" beast with two backs as a hideous aberration of nature: "By heaven, thou echo'st me / As if there were some monster in thy thought / Too hideous to be shown" (III. ii. 106-08). Emilia says of the jealousy of souls that "It is a monster / Begot upon itself, born on itself" (III. iv. 161-62), again implying hermaphroditic coition, while Desdemona replies, "Heaven keep the monster from Othello's mind" (III. iv. 161). The natural history behind Iago's "green-ey'd monster" has long been debated. Some detect the crocodile who deceives his victim with false tears, others the tiger who plays with his prey before devouring it, but as jealousy personified it "mocks" the "meat it feeds on" (III. iii. 167). A subsequent line of Othello's in the same scene ("If she be false, o then Heaven mocks itself!") likewise suggests self-division and predation as if "Heaven" (Desdemona) were the mythic woman-woman "feeding" upon herself. In Act IV. i. 62 Othello sets up a binary opposition ("a horn'd man's a monster and a beast"), but Iago's rejoinder ("There's many a beast then in a populous city / And many a civil monster") collapses it by implying that adultery is about as common as matrimony in "civilized" society. Montano's exclamation ("O monstrous act") on learning of Desdemona's murder in V. ii signifies the Janus-like proximity of "unnatural" hatred or strife to the "unnatural" desire for erotic (re)union which is love in the perverted mind of Othello.

Because the Cavino medal was not reproduced graphically until 1630, when I. P. Tomasinus included it in his *Illustrorum virorum elogia*, a volume of biographical sketches, Shakespeare perhaps saw the bronze itself, either in England or in Italy. We know that he knew of such portrait medallions, for he refers to one

in *The Winter's Tale*, when the jealous Leontes, convinced that his wife Hermione is making the two-backed beast with Polixenes, says that the former "wears her like her medal hanging about his neck" (I. ii. 307-08). Such medallions were struck in relatively large numbers and circulated freely among artists, scholars, and men of commerce with pretensions to culture and refinement. By the late sixteenth century Italian bankers and merchants were established in cities such as London, Bristol, and Southampton, even though the founding of the English Levant Company in 1581 had severely damaged direct trade with Venice.¹⁰ Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton and Shakespeare's patron in the mid 1590's, was both an Italophile and a lover of erotic art and may himself have possessed an example of Cavino's work. So might his friend, the Earl of Rutland, who attended the University of Padua in the late 1590's, though by and large noble collectors preferred the coins and medals of Antiquity to contemporary portrait medallions. More likely Shakespeare was shown the bronze by a returning traveller, or by one of the Italian painters (e.g. Trezzo, Ubaldini, Primavera, Zuccaro), architects, decorators, musicians (e.g. Baptista Bassano, father of Emilia, Rowse's candidate for the "dark lady" of the sonnets), men of letters, dancing masters or fencing instructors known to have been employed by the Elizabethan nobility.

It is also possible that Shakespeare visited Italy and saw the medal there. Grillo¹¹ suggests that the playwright made a trip to northern Italy, most likely between the autumn of 1592 and the summer of 1593, when the plague was so devastating that even the London law courts were suspended, though we have no evidence that Shakespeare ever left England. Grillo¹² notes strong details of local color in *Othello* which suggests first-hand knowledge of the Rialto, and, more tantalizingly, insists that Shakespeare's description of the *objets d'arts* in Gremio's house in *The Taming of the Shrew* reflects the author's recollection of a visit to a noble house in "fair Padua, nursery of the arts," a city referred to twenty-one times elsewhere in the dramatic canon. Since the University there was the only one in Italy which permitted Protestants to enroll, it consistently attracted aristocratic scholars from England like Sir Philip Sidney. Because of its proximity to Venice, it would have been an almost inevitable stopping-place for someone like Shakespeare, assuming he made an Italian tour in the first place. *Ekphrases*, or verbal depictions of works of art, occur most frequently in the plays of Shakespeare with Italian settings. *The Taming of the Shrew* also refers to a painting of Jove and Io which Grillo identifies specifically as Correggio's "Giove ed Io." The canvas hung in Milan in the palace of the sculptor Leoni from 1585

until 1600, and could well have been seen by the playwright in the course of his hypothetical sojourn.

Not only Aristophanes's double-bodied "monsters" from the *Symposium* but the two-faced figure of Janus links *Othello* to the Cavino medal. Wind¹³ suggests that the Paduan philosopher for whom the medal was made, Marcantonio Passeri, adopted the byname "De Janua" because of his Genoese descent, with a pun leading back to the mysterious Roman deity of beginnings and ends. The emblem of Janus in Whitney's *Choice of Emblems* (1586) is a benign one (fig. 3); the figure has two faces, a standing body, and holds a sceptre and a mirror. He looks backward and forward rather than up and down, and accompanying verses moralize his gaze by invoking the idea of New Years' Resolutions ("And if that fault within us doe appear / Within the year that is already done? / As Janus bids us alter with the year / And make amends within the yeare begonne").

In ancient Rome, the gates of Janus which led to the Forum were opened only in time of war. Though set in Venice, *Othello* employs the idea of armed conflict with the Turk as a metaphor for erotic strife, one in which its soldier hero conquers the infidel without a fight but cannot master his own passion. Insanely fearful of losing Desdemona, the "fair warrior" who is his better half (Cassio's "captain's captain"), Othello ends his own "occupation" as warrior ("Farewell the plumed troop," etc.) only to begin a belated—and benighted—peace-time career as jealous lover. The figure of *obligo* (fig. 4) in Ripa's *Iconologia* (Padova, 1618) is two-headed and four-armed, a helmeted *huomo armato* personifying diligence and ambidextrousness, but Othello fails to live up to this Renaissance variation of Janus because he compromises his duty as military governor in the unjust pursuit of personal revenge. One reason for including the Spanish name "Iago" in a cast of characters with Italian names is that "Santiago" ("St. James") was the traditional war cry of the Spanish Christians when they sought to drive the "infidels" or Islamic Moors back to Africa. In *Othello* the pagan hero is not defeated on the field, however, but on a jealous pretext invented by a devilish ensign who, ironically, bears a sanctified name.

Othello as failed Platonic lover is also a kind of Janus¹⁴ or "double" man who, in light of the paradoxical emblem on the Cavino medal (*Philosophia Duce Regredimur*), manages regression but not transcendence. The Platonic Eros, it will be remembered, can elevate or degrade, depending upon the condition of the lover's soul. Initially disdaining "heat" and the "palate of his appetite," Othello idealizes Desdemona as his "soul's joy." Suing for the right to take Desdemona with him to Cyprus, Othello

The Upstart Crow

likewise dismisses the "light-wing'd toys of feather'd Cupid" with their "wanton dullness" because he would "be free and bounteous to her mind" (I. iii. 268-69). In similar Platonic terms, she claims to have seen "Othello's visage in his mind." When jealousy destroys his rational faculty,¹⁵ Othello, once "Olympus high" in his love for Desdemona, plunges into the trough of carnality, reifying her "sweet body" as a "cistern" for "foul toads to knot and gender in." By the end of the play, his capacity to idealize love has degenerated to an Iago-like preoccupation with the vileness of flesh: "I had rather be a toad / And live up on the foul vapor of a dungeon / Than keep a corner of the *thing* I love / For others' uses" (III. iii. 270-73).

The name of Othello's Inn in Venice, the "Sagittar," invokes yet another mythic "monster" of divided nature, emblemizing the conflict between "man" and "beast" within the Moor himself. The defeat of the centaurs by the Lapithae symbolized the triumph of reason over passion to the denizens of Plato's Athens, and its representation on the most famous of the Parthenon metopes is evidence of its central significance to Greek culture as an icon of civilization. An outsider, Othello, is accused by Brabantio of abducting Desdemona, thereby obviating the possibility of a proper marriage to one of the "wealthy curl'd darlings" of her native Venice. Iago grossly stigmatizes Othello as a "Barbary horse" and predicts that Brabantio's future family members will be something less than human: "you'll have your nephews neigh to you; you'll have coursers for cousins, and gennets for germans" (I. i. 112-13). Signifying Desdemona's and Cassio's mutual affinity as "Platonic" (both have "fair" exteriors matched by noble souls, and Cassio is, after all specifically identified as a Florentine), the text gives sly credence to this "meeting of true minds." Othello finally acknowledges the intellectual deficiency of his soul by admitting that he loved "not wisely but too well." At the same time, his self-image as "circumcised dog" renders his suicide as much an act of animal castration as of "civilized" justice.

"Two-faced" rather than "honest," Iago actually swears by Janus in I. ii. 33 to in a way that defines his "double knavery" and moral duplicity with yet another "monster" image. A character in Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the principle source of *As You Like It*, goes so far as to equate Fortuna with the two-headed Roman divinity: "thou art double-faced like Janus, carrying frowns in the one to threaten, and smiles in the other to betray." Ripa's "fraude" (fig. 5), a female personification with two heads—one young and beautiful, the other old and ugly—also seems related to the iconography of Janus, and would certainly have been known to the playwright. Possessing an eagle's feet and a scorpion's tail which

discharges a secret poison, she preys on the honor of others according to the accompanying prose commentary. She holds a mask of deception in one hand and two hearts in the other in an image strongly reminiscent of Iago's proverbial "sleeve." Robert Penn Warren once observed that all of Shakespeare's villains are rationalists, and Iago's philosophy, if it may be called that, systematically perverts Platonism. In the relationship of love to chaos which he posits ("Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light"), Iago envisions ugliness as the end of erotic union rather than beauty. What is more, his aesthetic is incapable of distinguishing between the heavenly love of souls and the earthly coupling of bodies:

If the [beam] of our lives had not one scale of reason, to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our natures would conduct us to most prepost'rous conclusions. But we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, [our] unbitted lusts; whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

(I. iii. 326-33)

The phrase "unbitted lusts" evokes the older Greek symbol¹⁶ of the horse as uncontrolled passion as well as his own earlier designation of Othello as a "Barbary horse." It may even derive from the image of the dark horse from the chariot metaphor of the soul in the *Phaedrus*.¹⁷ Before the fury of jealousy possesses Othello's soul, Iago describes him as docile enough to be led "tenderly by th' nose / As asses are" (I. iii. 401-02).

In the comic banter between Iago and Desdemona in II. i.—a parody of a Platonic dialogue¹⁸ in miniature—Iago rejects the idea in the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* that the lover in a state of divine madness is wiser than the beloved because contemplation of beauty leads to a vision of the forms. For him—in contrast to Othello and Desdemona—erotic love is sensual pleasure unleavened by metaphysics or the poetry of transcendence: "She never yet was foolish that was fair / For even folly helped her to an heir." Desdemona calls Iago's misogynistic travesties "old paradoxes," as if she were wise to the kind of trickery practiced by the Sophists on Socrates. A foil to Desdemona, with her high-minded conception of woman in love, Iago consistently denigrates sexual acts as involuntary functions such as vomiting (II. i. 231-33) and excretion (I. iii. 347-49 and II. i. 174-77). Far from lifting man out of the mire of sensuality and impermanence, physical union in his view merely reinforces the idea that humans themselves are beasts ("prime as goats, as hot as monkeys"). For Iago coition is not a bodily means to a spiritual end but merely an "incorporate conclusion." He puns

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repeatedly on "thing," and his wedding message of congratulations epitomizes his debased sensibility: "Happiness to their sheets."

By employing Cyprus, the birthplace of love in Greek mythology, as the setting for most of his play, Shakespeare seems to invoke the two Aphrodites of the *Symposium*¹⁹ as he once again relies on a doubling strategy, one in which allegory and dramatic realism are carefully balanced. In reality neither the Uranian Aphrodite of moral perfection and generative power ("Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature") nor the Pandemonian Aphrodite ("cunning whore," "lewd minx," and "strumpet"), Desdemona suffers much from Othello's fragile idealism. Cassio, a nearer "soulmate," evokes Renaissance paintings of Aphrodite's birth from the sea by characterizing Desdemona as "the riches of the ship" come ashore (II. i. 83). More obviously a "type" of Virgin Mary ("Hail to thee, lady! and the grace of heaven / Before, behind thee, and on every hand / Enwheel thee round!"), Desdemona possesses a name which contains the Greek word "demon." She joins the ambiguous power of Aphrodite with that of her son, the Platonic "demon" Eros, in Shakespeare's Cyprian scheme.

The theme of heterosexual division and strife after Othello and Desdemona are "severed" by Iago is travestied by Shakespeare as he shows the "Janus" or two-faced nature of Iago's own hidden homosexual love for Othello ("I am your own forever") and for Cassio ("He hath a daily beauty in his life that makes me ugly") masquerading as "honest" friendship.²⁰ In a quasi-Platonic simile which purports to describe the drunken brawl between Cassio and Montano, Iago reveals his own sexual orientation:

. . . Friends all, but now, even now;
In quarter, and in terms like bride and groom
Devesting them to bed, and then, but now
As if some planet had outwitted men
Swords out, and tilting one at other's breast
In opposition bloody.

(II. iii. 179-84)

Aristophanes' "monster" is unmistakably evoked by Iago as he further betrays his latent homosexual desire for Cassio. Imputing a nocturnal dream to the latter, the real "dream" in question is his own Freudian daydream with its characteristic wish-fulfillment:

In sleep I heard him say, "Sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves";
And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand;
Cry, "O sweet creature!" and then kiss me hard,

As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots,
That grew upon my lips, [then] laid his leg
[Over] my thigh, and [sigh'd], and [kiss'd], and then
[Cried], "Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor!"
(III. iii. 419-26)

In response to Iago's perverse rendering of two males in a position of heterosexual coition, Othello articulates a predictable "O monstrous, monstrous," partly out of horror at the unnaturalness of homosexual coupling, but also because in Roman fashion he regards the dream as a *monstrum* or divine portent of Desdemona's infidelity ("But this denoted a foregone conclusion" he replies to Iago's "Nay, this was but his dream").

In *The Merchant of Venice*, an earlier play of Shakespeare's much concerned with the tragic implications of repressed homosexual love, an image related to the Cavino medal likewise makes itself felt. Solanio, who is inseparable from Solario (they enter and exit together as a "couple" and complete each other's thoughts uncannily), links the Roman "double" God with the Platonic "monster" as he comments on the symbiotic relationship between Antonio and Bassanio: "By two-headed Janus / Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time" (I. i. 50-51). In a later play concerned with the homoerotic bonding of warriors, *Coriolanus*, the hero employs a Platonic trope to observe how readily love can turn into its opposite, hate:

. . . Friends now fast sworn,
Whose double bosoms seem to wear one heart,
Whose hours, whose bed, whose meal and exercise
Are still together, who twin, as 'twere, in love
Unseparable, shall within this hour,
On a dissension of a doit, break out
To bitterest enmity. . . .

(IV. iv. 12-18)

Evoking "Fraude," Volumnia observes that "honor and policy, like unsever'd friends, i'th'war do grow together" (III. ii. 42-43). A servant in the following scene returns to the idea of the Platonic "monster" as he describes Aufidius' affection for Coriolanus, recalling Phaedrus' argument in the *Symposium* that lovers make the most courageous soldiers because they fear nothing more than disgracing themselves in each other's sight:²¹

Our general himself makes a mistress of him, sanctifies himself with's hand, and turns up the white o'th'eye to his discourse. But the bottom of the news is, our general is cut 'i' th'middle, and but one half of what he was

yesterday; for the other has half, by the en-treaty and
grant of the whole table.

(IV. v. 194-200)

But Shakespeare's final evocation of Aristophanes' "monster" in *Othello* evokes the original "man-woman." After cutting his throat, Othello falls on top of Desdemona's lifeless body²² ("I kiss'd thee 'ere I kill'd thee. No way but this / Killing myself to die upon a kiss"), thereby approximating a *tableau vivante* strongly reminiscent of the Cavino medal. The lovers' frozen embrace on a "loaded bed" caps the Platonic myth of primal union with a tragic image of the *liebestod*.

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Figure 1. Woodcut of the reverse side of Giovanni Cavino's portrait medallion of Marcantonio Passeri, c. 1560, as printed in I. P. Thomasinus, *Illustrorum vivorum elogia* (Padua, 1630).



Figure 2. Hermaphroditus from Reusner's *Aureolorum Emblematum* (Strassburg, 1591).



Figure 3. Janus as depicted in Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes* (Lyden, 1586).



Figure 4. "Obligo" from Ripa's *Iconologia* (Padua, 1618).



Figure 5. "Fraude" from Ripa's *Iconologia* (Padua, 1618).

Notes

¹All textual references are to *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

²*The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902), p. 483.

³Jowett, p. 484.

⁴Leslie A. Fiedler, "Some Contexts of Shakespeare's Sonnets" in *The Riddle of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: Basic Books, 1962), pp. 81-83; John M. Steadman, "'Like Two Spirits': Shakespeare and Ficino," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 10 (1959), pp. 244-46; John Vyvyan, *Shakespeare and the Rose of Love* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1960), *passim*; Rafael Koskimies, "The Question of Platonism in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 71 (1970), pp. 266-70; Jean Fuzier, "Le Banquet de Shakespeare: Les Sonnets et le platonisme authentique," *Études Anglaises*, 34 (1981), 1-15; and Joseph Pequigny, *Such is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 29, all find in Shakespeare echoes of the *Symposium*. Numerous editions of Latin translations by Ficino and de Serres were available in the sixteenth century.

⁵Marianne L. Novy, *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 39.

⁶*The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1955), p. 104.

⁷Thomas P. Roche, *The Kindly Flame* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), pp. 135-36.

⁸John Hankins, *Source and Meaning in Plato's Allegory* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), pp. 167-68.

⁹The word "monster" occurs seventy times in the canon, thirty-eight of them in *The Tempest*, for my purpose most notably when Stefano perceives underneath a gaberdine four arms and four legs which turn out not to belong to a single creature or "monster" at all but to Caliban and Trinculo. The word "monstrous" occurs seven times in *Othello* and fifty-eight times elsewhere in the canon.

¹⁰Logan Pearsall Smith, *The Life and Letters of Henry Wotton* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1907), vol. 1, p. 72.

¹¹Ernesto Grillo, *Shakespeare and Italy* (Glasgow: Glasgow Univ. Press, 1949), p. 133.

¹²Grillo, p. 135.

¹³Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), pp. 165-66.

¹⁴Wind, p. 165, quotes Pico on "celestial souls" in antique poetry as being "signified by the double-headed Janus, because, being supplied like him with eyes in front and behind, they can at the same time see the spiritual things and provide for the material." In this passage from the *Commento* Pico cites both Aristophanes' parable and Ovid's *Fasti* with its opening image of Janus presiding over the gates of heaven.

¹⁵Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1930), p. 148, sees jealousy as a "compounded" passion, that is, as deriving from both envy and hatred, the Platonic opposite of "love."

¹⁶See, for example, ch. 2, bk. 4 of Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica* (Basel, 1575) for the horse as symbol of immoderate passion.

¹⁷Jowett, p. 558.

¹⁸The occasion commemorated in the *Symposium* is a drinking party at which Socrates and his friends debate the nature of love. The drunken revelry in II. iii. includes a bawdy song by Iago on St. Stephen's breeches, and Cassio's subsequent

frenzied intoxication serves as a typically Socratic metaphor for Roderigo's and Othello's erotomania.

¹⁹Jowett, p. 475.

²⁰Martin Wangh, "Othello: The Tragedy of Iago," *Psychoanalytical Quarterly* (1950), made the first systematic case for such an interpretation, although Edwin Booth had acted a "latent" Iago well before the advent of Viennese psychiatry. Stanley Edgar Hyman in *Iago, Some Approaches to the Illusion of his Motivation* (Atheneum: New York, 1970), pp. 101-21, comments on the relevant passages but avoids the pseudoscientific pedantry of most "clinical" readings.

²¹Jowett, p. 474.

²²*The Riverside Shakespeare* reprints in brackets a stage direction from the Collier MS in Perkins' Second Folio (1632) which is also included in the old Globe edition: "[Falls on the bed and] dies."

A *Macbeth* for Our Time by **Bernice W. Kliman**

In the winter of 1990, Richard Jordan directed *Macbeth* for the New York Public Theater cycle of Shakespeare. He dared to run against the grain of what reviewers expected in a favorite play.¹ Their comments reveal that they came to the theater with preconceived ideas about what the play should be, and the production did not persuade them to welcome Jordan's interpretation as a valid alternative. This sensitive version and the adverse response to it can help to illumine the on-going project to derive meaning from the play and the resistance to the development of even intelligent attempts to uncover unfamiliar facets of the play.

Jordan disappointed those who envision a noble but malleable Macbeth and a powerful Lady Macbeth, for assisted by Raul Julia's Macbeth and Melinda Mullins' Lady, Jordan reversed the pattern. As Julia embodied him, Macbeth is your standard-issue dictator, of any country, any time—formidable, capable of great rage, less often of a religious impulse and love, but almost always clear-headed and logical rather than passionate, his downfall the accidental result of excess and paranoia. Since nothing about Julia's portrayal would encourage the audience to project themselves onto his image, Jordan blocked the audience from engaging in comfortable, self-congratulatory armchair villainy. One reviewer, objecting, quoted W. H. Auden's observation: "Watching *Macbeth* every member of the audience knows that the possibility of becoming a Macbeth exists in his nature."² By casting a cool eye on the protagonist, the production forced the audience to take an intellectual interest in the proceedings on stage; they were not going to be swept away by the poet-monster. The gain is a portrayal that shows evil without mitigation and without the comforting moral lesson that evil does not pay—because it might so easily *have* paid.

As demanded by the Joseph Papp philosophy for the cycle, a star played the protagonist, but the production rather than the individual actor was featured. To support his main, overall interpretation, Jordan crafted sensible resolutions for many moments in the play, moving smoothly to his main themes. He controlled entrances neatly, sometimes by dividing speeches differently from the text. Ross enters (I. ii) to tell part of the story of Macbeth's victories, then sturdy little Angus comes bounding in to complete the tale (belonging entirely to Ross in the text) with the information that Sweno has agreed to pay a handsome ransom to bury his dead. In the letter scene (I. v), two messengers rush in, first a woman, then a man, to tell Lady Macbeth her husband is coming,

dividing the text's single servant's two speeches between them, filling the castle with the bustle of everyday life and domesticating the tragedy. Overlapping entrances and exits help speed the play. Lennox and an unnamed thane enter for the scene of the disaffection of the lords (III. vi) while Macbeth lies unconscious after his encounter with the witches in the cauldron scene (IV. i). Poking Macbeth to see if he is dead or asleep, Lennox begins trying to win over the suspicious thane. Then Macbeth wakes and IV. i proceeds. After questioning Lennox about the witches and about Macduff, Macbeth fiercely lays out his bloody plans to the audience, downstage, while Lennox and the unnamed lord confer privately upstage, apparently reaching agreement. The pacing is brisk, the motivation clear.

The director devised ingenious solutions for the play's cruxes. Next to the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the principal one is the nature of the witches, for which Jordan elected to emulate the witches of early revivals and to pay attention to signals in the folio text. Jordan's three women were wandering peddlers and necromancers, sometimes with a rough wooden covered cart that contained their stock in trade, including a cleaver to cut the needed finger from the hand of the "birth-strangled babe / Ditch-delivered by a drab" (IV. i. 30-31).³ Like Garrick's witches they had "an appearance more like basket women and trulls than creatures of enchantment."⁴ The young witch with the wild hair, the dark one with a turban, and the old one with grizzled hair each played an instrument—a recorder, a triangle or rattle, and a tambourine. When they struck their instruments, they looked up askance to hear the answering thunder and lightning that they called forth. The young one also carried a tiny rag doll to symbolize Macbeth, and something about it told her when he was coming. Voodooism is also implicit when the oldest one triumphantly showed the others a bloody rag she had pulled from Macbeth's hand. Inspired by the demon of malicious mischief (rather than Fate or Destiny or Hell-Fire), they exercised supernatural control, being able to incite the thunder and to know the future. They screeched with laughter and gleefully jumped up and down when their work went well. The turbaned witch, disguised as a man, was the third murderer, who purposefully spirited Fleance away, repeating to him Banquo's words, "Fly Fleance, fly! Thou mayst revenge," planting the seeds for further mischief. When the other two, mistaking her for Fleance, stabbed her repeatedly and then saw their mistake, she rose again, quite whole, terrifying them and delighting herself. This business, used in previews and unfortunately abandoned sometime later, objectified their nature, their magic potency coupled with spiteful playfulness. To underline his

view of the witches, Jordan even kept some of the Hecate lines though cutting the Hecate scenes, as usual. Upon tasting the brew in the cauldron, the First Witch cries:

O, well done!
 [She falls back from its punch, eliciting a laugh]:
 I commend your pains, . . .
 (IV. i. 39)

He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear:
 And you all know security
 Is mortals' chiefest enemy.
 (III. v. 30-33)

These witches were like medieval figures of malice—often comically high-spirited as well as superhumanly powerful. This combination for Jordan's witches suggests what is true in medieval drama: the devil and his party may incite to crime and they control supernatural powers to make evil seem attractive, but ultimately free will operates. The witches enjoy Macbeth's evil and encourage him, but he manages his own downfall. They continue to be interested in his progress, punctuating the ends of some scenes with thunder and lightning. Often, they peer over the low back wall of the set, observing. They are there at the *coup de grace*. But their omnipresence does not signify their power over human choice in this production, for their characterization, comic rather than cosmic, intimates that the outcome could have been happy, as it is for the protagonist of *Mankind*, had Macbeth chosen differently.

These were not, however, the witches that reviewers wanted to see. The cart reminded many reviewers of *Mother Courage*, an inappropriate parallel, they seemed to feel, for the great tragedy because too paltry somehow. Clive Barnes calls them "the least mysterious, and the least convincing in my experience, absurdly comical in their casual lack of necromancy and magic, while their sense of controlling the action . . . is totally un-Shakespearean in its non-Elizabethan idea of witchcraft."⁵ He does not disclose the monolithic Renaissance concept of witchcraft to which he alludes. Edith Oliver of *The New Yorker* calls it a production "without the supernatural" but not "without hokum"—presumably her judgment on the absence of demonic grandeur in their portrayal (29 Jan. 1990, p. 83). Since she admires Julia's "commanding presence and eloquence," but nevertheless deplores this "feckless production" for its absence of tragedy, horror, or spirit, one may surmise that, if only the witches had been better somehow, Julia would have been able to portray the Macbeth she wanted. Howard Kissel of *The Daily News* disliked almost everything about the

production but mentions first the witches who, he says, behave more like “itinerant musicians in search of Elizabeth Swados” than like the “supernatural, hellish creatures” he expected (17 Jan. 1990, p. 31). Melanie Kirkpatrick of *The Wall Street Journal* noticed that “the overall effect is more vaudevillian than villainous,” and she declares that “somehow I don’t think Shakespeare intended his wicked threesome as comic relief” (19 Jan. 1990). Given the folio text, how can she be sure?

The nature of the three sisters is not clear from the folio, which shows the witches to be not only mysterious and uncanny but also the creatures of “vulgar spite” that A. C. Bradley long ago described,⁶ whose occupation is “Killing swine,” who weave spells for the sake of chestnuts, who beg to see a pilot’s thumb: “Show me, show me” (all from I. iii). Modern texts collapse two folio words—*weyward* and *weyard*—into one, both emended to *weird* by Lewis Theobald, 1733, and since accepted by most other editors—an adjective that implies supernatural intervention and fatality (*wyrd*).⁷ His emendation is based, understandably enough, on the use of the word *weird* in the Scottish chronicles and Holinshed.⁸ Though *weyard*, which the *OED* says can be an alternative spelling of *weird*, offers some textual support for Theobald’s emendation, *weird* is never used by Shakespeare in the sense that Theobald meant—nor in any sense at all throughout the corpus in the texts now extant. *Weyward* is an even less likely candidate for emendation to *weird*. Instead of a mistaken *weird*, *weyward* could be an alternate spelling of the word *wayward*, a word used fairly frequently by Shakespeare. If the sisters are *weyward*/*wayward* rather than or in addition to instruments of fate, they would be, as Theobald says, “perverse, froward, moody.” Theobald’s argument that the women would not have called themselves *weyward* overlooks their potential for playful self-mockery. The rub is that the spelling *weyward* for *wayward* appears nowhere else in the folio. Fourteen times in the canon Shakespeare uses the word *wayward*, including once in *Macbeth* to describe the protagonist, and the first syllable is always spelled with the “a.”⁹ With no parallels within the canon to guide us, the folio is not merely ambiguous but also indeterminate.¹⁰

A long performance history of spectacular, and often silly, but hardly terrifying witches notwithstanding, critics and reviewers persist in demanding the powerful supernatural and fateful creatures that they envision for the tragedy, that make of the fall of Macbeth enigmatic and inexplicable or at least otherworldly. They cannot adjust to merely nasty devilish sorts who force the audience to center the tragedy in society’s and Macbeth’s defects. Although Kirkpatrick did catch on to Jordan’s “emphasis on Macbeth as a deliberate malefactor and less the victim of destructive forces”

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(*The Wall Street Journal*, 19 Jan. 1990), she did not realize that the witches must be re-envisioned for Jordan to achieve that emphasis. He gained theatrically interesting witches without diminishing Macbeth's tragic culpability.

Starting with the witches and extending to all the other characters, the Public's production insisted on a high level of realistic action that resisted the effect of the supernatural elements it retained. In early previews (for sixteen performances), Jordan insisted upon the contemporaneity of the play by including in some scenes a transistor radio and putting the actors into modern dress. While the modern prop and costumes disappeared, they helped establish a modern mindset in the actors: while acting those scenes later Julia recalled the feelings that the prop and costumes had given him.¹¹ Though he denied acting like a modern dictator, once costumed in his rough-textured, medieval garb, his performance contradicts him. The production's realism should have enhanced for reviewers the connections between the play and contemporary events. Frank Rich had such events in mind, for he begins his review in *The New York Times*: "That indelible image of Nicolae Ceausescu's lifeless body lying on the ground could be the final scene in a modern-dress staging of 'Macbeth'" (17 Jan. 1990, C13). But in Rich's view the Public's production did not succeed because, he says, it was set "in a conventionally gray feudal universe, and recited with an almost complete absence of passion. . . . It would be hard," he says, "to imagine a more irrelevant production" of the tragedy. He appears to believe that real-life dictatorships are more colorful and more passionate than Jordan's vision of the Scots dictatorship. Rich wanted intensity, and he did not get it. He wanted objective correlatives on stage for "the supernatural images of warped nature, of scorpion-infested brains and screeching owls and carnivorous wild horses." He is unwilling to accept the pallidness of high criminality.

Jordan gains in horror with his *thinking* Macbeth, who savors a fantasy of murder soon after hearing the witches' prophecy (I. iii. 134-42). Seeing the dagger (invisible to the audience), rather than starting with terror, he muses. Even after the murder, he is curious rather than stung by remorse or regret: "But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?" (II. ii. 30), he asks quizzically. He cannot grasp that he has indeed "jump[ed] the life to come" (I. vii. 7) with his choice of murdering Duncan. Waiting for Macduff to return from Duncan's rooms to announce the murder does not unnerve him. Julia's Macbeth remains calm, sad, and sincere when he describes murdering the grooms. Even in his "barren sceptre" soliloquy (III. i. 48-72), Macbeth, his eyes scanning the audience, does not allow himself to get too riled. Kissel (*The Daily News*, 17

Jan. 1990, p. 31) hated this. He believed it “crazy” to have Macbeth “deliver his soliloquies to the audience as if he were offhandedly explaining things rather than wrestling with his conscience.” He admitted that Julia’s *Macbeth* does not, in any case, do much wrestling, but he could not imagine why Jordan made such a choice and did not see it as part of a coherent pattern. Macbeth, rather than groan with remorseful frustration, laughs sarcastically as he speaks of “the seeds of Banquo kings” (III. i. 70). He seeks out the witches without losing his self-possession, saying “But no more sights” after the witches’ caldron scene wearily rather than with hair-raising horror (IV. i. 155). Julia’s *Macbeth* is one of the contemporary breed of tyrants who show no remorse even after they are deposed, who feel no anguish as their crimes are paraded before them, and who do not realize that they have descended into hell. Jordan’s *Macbeth* is unsettling: is it really possible for a thinking person to commit such crimes as he commits? To find a kind of joyless pleasure in treachery? The sad answer is “yes.” This *Macbeth* hesitated at first to commit a murder more from fear than from moral repugnance, then descended all the way into depravity in his efforts to consolidate his gains and overcome potential adversaries. Though by the end he is unbendingly bad, he follows no thrillingly steep trajectory from nobility to evil.

An audience can commiserate with even an evil thane if, like Olivier’s and McKellen’s *Macbeths*, his remorse and sorrow urge pity. Wherever *Macbeth* has such opportunities, Julia undercuts them. In the speech that most disarmingly invites audience sympathy through *Macbeth*’s self-knowledge—“My way of life / Is fall’n into the sear, the yellow leaf”—he plays it sardonically—distancing the audience’s response (V. iii. 22-28).

Nor did a larger-than-life stature put him beyond good and evil. Julia’s *Macbeth* is no Faust. His chief quality is valor, and Julia explores the nuances of the man’s daring. Capable of sudden violence, he almost throttles the murderer who tells him Fleance has escaped. At the banquet, though disconcerted by the ghost, he is believable when he says, “What man dare, I dare,” outfacing the specter, which he (like Olivier) chases off, screaming at it from the table top (III. iv. 99). At the same time, a sadistic gaiety marks many of his encounters, as when he fights with Young Siward and then with Macduff, though brought to his knees by a wound on the leg. His valiant fury retains the audience’s interest if not concern.

His curse is a paranoia that Jordan shaped though Banquo’s characterization. After the murder, Banquo (Larry Bryggman) suspects that *Macbeth* “play’dst most foully” (III. i. 2-3) for the crown, but decides like the true pragmatist he is to see what will be in store for him. He sincerely offers *Macbeth* his service (III. i. 15-

18), and he is the one who, in an addition to the text, leads the other thanes three times by shouting "All hail," to which the thanes respond "Hail, Macbeth." Banquo nods his agreement when Macbeth speaks of the "strange invention" of Duncan's sons, patting Macbeth in the way that these Scots show their affection, taking in his two hands the admonitory finger Macbeth wags at him to emphasize the warning "Fail not our feast" (III. i. 32, 27). Earlier, Banquo excused Macbeth without giving him away, explaining to Ross and Angus that our partner is "rapt" because he is unaccustomed to new honors (I. iii. 142, 144-46): Banquo knew it was something more than that; he covers up.

The reviewers praised Larry Bryggman as an actor in general but found him curiously lacking in this production. Rich, speaking of Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm and Ross, says: "Their characterizations are so vague that probably no one would notice if they gave identical performances in one another's roles" (*New York Times*, 17 Jan. 1990). That judgment is unfair. Banquo does not stand out in the Public's production as a *noble* man who overcomes "the cursèd thoughts that nature / Gives way to in repose" (II. i. 8-9), nor is he struggling mightily with such thoughts. But he is well-distinguished from the others. Barnes, in contrast to Rich, obviously understood Bryggman's characterization, but he expected something else from Banquo, did not want him to be, as he describes Bryggman's Banquo, "as outrageously ambitious as Macbeth . . ." (*New York Post*, 17 Jan. 1990). But Jordan had his defensible reasons for the interpretation: Jordan not only lowered Macbeth to an everyday kind of malignity but also diminished the other characters whom most reviewers prefer to see in sharp contrast to Macbeth, whom they wish to see as good men who do not succumb no matter what the temptations. The society is at root healthy, they want to believe. Jordan's view is much less sanguine—and there is plenty of support in Shakespeare for unsympathetic views of such ambiguous characters as Banquo. After Duncan's murder, for example, Banquo tells no one about the sisters' prophecy, which would have kindled the thanes' suspicions about Macbeth. He can be inferred to be instrumental in Macbeth's election as king, since he takes a leading role in moving the stunned group to action (II. iii. 121-28), and he is rewarded by being chosen as a chief councillor (III. i. 20-22). After he briefly expresses in soliloquy his suspicions about Macbeth (III. i. 1-3), he dwells on the prophecies for his family (III. i. 3-10) and moments later declares his allegiance to the man he suspects (III. i. 15-18). If productions are justified in ignoring such textual hints, surely a production may also heed them.

Had Jordan's *Macbeth* taken Banquo for his freely-given pledge of fealty, *Macbeth* might not, the director implies, have been deposed in war. That was unthinkable to the reviewers. This *Macbeth*'s continuation in crime, not his original regicide, defeated him. In this sense, the director adheres to the chronicles, for several murderous usurpers in Scots history did prosper in spite of murders, especially if their reigns were worthy thereafter. The story of Kenneth III occurs in the chronicles between those of King Duff (Kenneth's brother) and *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's two main sources for the play. Kenneth reigned for a long time after killing the rightful heir so that his own son would succeed him, and even the historical *Macbeth*, as is well known, reigned for some seventeen years (1040-57) before his excesses stimulated revolt. Shakespeare speeds up events and does not give his protagonist any of the juridical abilities that the chronicles ascribe to both of these murderers; his *Macbeth* rushes toward destruction. Jordan, while like Shakespeare denying *Macbeth* any "king-becoming graces," suggests that evil can flourish. We have in our time, which also is closer in some ways to the spirit of the chronicles than to that of the tragedy as conventionally perceived, seen evil prosper before revulsion unseats it. At this very moment of writing, events in Bosnia and Somalia cry out for reactions that are slow in coming.

The ignoble *Macbeth* does not require a powerful wife to egg him on. Julia considered that he was breaking an old stereotype about *Macbeth* in characterizing him as a "macho" man. *Macbeth*, Julia is sure, is no "wimp"—by which he means that *Macbeth* is not a man whose manly sense of honor keeps him from killing his guest or whose ambitions require the spur of a dominating wife.¹² He drew his assumption about former *Macbeths* from traces of early choices, which stemmed very possibly from historical accident. Garrick, who saw the character as essentially noble, needed a strong co-actor to play Lady *Macbeth*—and found her only in Hannah Pritchard. Sarah Siddons, who followed, opened in 1785 with a nondescript actor, a Mr. Smith, as her lead, and continued later with her brother Philip Kemble. With the example of Mrs. Pritchard before her and certainly without an alternative, strong *Macbeth* to partner her, it was inevitable that her Lady would be powerful, especially given her own characteristic strength.¹³ Though vicious *Macbeths* and gentle Lady *Macbeths* took the boards as early as Helen Faucit, and Henry Irving with Ellen Terry, it seems that the Pritchard/Siddons precedent created its own standard—and deviation from what has become institutionalized cannot be accomplished easily.¹⁴

For Julia to portray the Macbeth he wanted to be, no “wimp” when it comes to murdering his kinsman and his king, he needed the Lady Macbeth he got. Melinda Mullins, far from the tremendous viragoes of the eighteenth century, played a charming and shallow Lady Macbeth. Mullins emphasizes her cheerful, good-natured aspects—more horrifying perhaps in a murderer than demonic terribleness. Reviewers do not like to contemplate the idea that someone as ordinarily “nice” as Mullins’ Lady could be a murderer. Kissel (*The Daily News*, 17 Jan. 1990, p. 31) calls her disparagingly “a wildly vivacious hostess.” Like Macbeth, she is supposed by reviewers to be beyond such everyday social grace. They are presumed to be, in Rich’s terms, “intimate partners in psychosis and butchery.” Butchers they are, but psychotics they are not—though it is comforting to think of such evil as stemming only from profound and grand aberrations of mind and psyche. Well able to be a winning hostess even to Duncan whom she hopes to murder, she has a special relationship with Banquo. Upon his arrival with the king (I. vi), he would monopolize her if the king would let him: twice Duncan removes her from Banquo’s arm. At the banquet, too, she moves easily among her guests, flashing her lovely smile, putting all at ease. Even at the end of the banquet, without stridency she urges the guests to leave. Macbeth had vented at her his anger about the ghost of Banquo, and she had borne it. Her hunched posture and distraught face afterward well expressed her fear and amazement. Like many another obedient wife, she expected her husband to treat her well, her reward for subservience.

Without at all emulating Siddons’ fierceness, Mullins acts Siddons’ belief that the thane’s wife must exhibit the tender qualities that will bind him to her. Strong and beautiful, Mullins’ Lady believably connects physically with Julia’s Macbeth—as at least some of the reviewers recognized. The prospect of ruling excites them both, but she is a partner in the greatness she craves mainly for him. At the “masterdom” she predicts (I. v. 68), she kneels to him playfully. In her persuasion scene (I. vii) she does not enter hectoring him but instead affectionately kisses him, asking him “Why have you left the chamber?” as a matter of curiosity rather than of reproach. When she answers his query about Duncan, has the king asked for him, she says with a laugh, “Know you not he has?” She seems to be jokingly saying, “You know Duncan.” She becomes angry slowly at his change of mind but without shedding her femininity. Julia’s “Bring forth men-children only” is full of amused admiration, not overawed terror. Like Olivier’s and McKellen’s Macbeths, Julia’s thane convinces himself through his own rationalization:

. . . Will it not be received,
 When we have marked with blood those sleepy two
 Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,
 That they have done't?

(I. vii. 74-77)

A person who does not consider too deeply, she says "We fail!" in response to his "If we should fail?" (I. vii. 59) with a smile on her face and her arms open high and wide; charming and shallow, she does not understand what either success or failure would bring. Clive Barnes says reluctantly: "Lady Macbeth's transference of a defiant exclamation point for a disbelieving question mark, after Macbeth ponders failure, can be regarded as valid re-interpretation." Far from reinterpretation, her exclamation derives from a possible meaning of the folio's question mark. In 1623, as students of typography know, the difference between the exclamation and the question mark had not solidified, and thus question marks are sometimes found where the exclamation is meant. Modern editors, who must select one or the other, generally choose the question mark. But many actors have followed Siddons in saying the words with a downward inflection (including among others Francesca Annis in Polanski's *Macbeth*, 1971, and Jane Lapotaire in the BBC production, 1982). Mullins' exclamation is of a piece with the rest of her interpretation; her Lady Macbeth is unthinking.

Her characterization was the target of the reviewers' most severe criticism. They did not see that her characterization fit the production. AP drama critic Michael Kuchwara wanted extreme behavior that licensed him to think he was seeing unprecedented actions. Rich damns her outright: "Lady Macbeth is a conspicuous disaster. When she tries to spur on Mr. Julia's ambition in the early scenes, it is with the peevish inflections and fist-waving tantrums of a spoiled schoolgirl" (*New York Times*, 17 Jan. 1990). Linda Winer of *Newsday* thought that "The idea of a macho Macbeth and a weak Lady Macbeth sounds almost perverse enough to be intriguing," failing to recognize that the strong and terrible Lady Macbeth is only one performance choice. She is, as *Variety* noted, "more an accomplice than an equal conspirator," which latter obviously is what the reviewer had expected. Kuchwara petulantly proclaims that Lady Macbeth is "supposed to be the instigator." He ignores the fact that before we see Lady Macbeth on stage, Macbeth reveals that the witch's prophecy immediately set his mind on murder (I. iii. 134-42) and that he moves to certainty before he sees Lady Macbeth (I. iv. 50-53). Though she may be a forceful advocate of murder, she is not the first to think of it.

Next to terrible grandeur in Lady Macbeth, reviewers anticipate seeing her tortured by her murderous choices. But in the

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Public's production, Macbeth's behavior towards her after the murder and not her own remorse unseats her reason. Though he kisses her hand in their first court scene, he nevertheless dismisses her decisively with "God be with you" (III. i. 43).¹⁵ Until then, there had been a pleased look playing on her expressive face, along with apprehensive glances at him, her recognition that all is not well with him; he, on the other hand, has not a moment's satisfaction in being king, responds wearily to the thanes' cheers, and never once shows any concern for her reactions. When they are alone for the first time after the discovery of the murder (III. ii), he rejects her solicitude with impatient gestures and tones, cruelly mimicking her advice when telling her to be pleasant to Banquo. She is no longer his partner, though she tries with the old playfulness and touches to reach him. His innuendoes about Banquo terrify her, and because a relationship has been built between her and Banquo, her response is concrete and believable. Smiling bitterly, sometimes breaking out into a hideous laugh, he speaks the words ("light thickens . . .") that bewilder and frighten her. The scene ends with a rape. Rich inexplicably refers to this as "Jordan's interpolation of a modest sexual encounter," and Winer calls this an attempt by Jordan to "underline their sexual attraction"; neither Rich nor Winer, it seems, noticed Macbeth's knee in her stomach, his face smothering her outcry. Jordan further reduces by this gratuitous violence his much-diminished villain: Macbeth violates the wife who has always been content to defer to him. Earlier he had rejected her invitation when she had tried to coax him into an embrace; perversely, he wants her only when she has shrunk from him.

She returns in her sleepwalking to the time when Macbeth appeared to value her ideas; thus her sleepwalking scene is not what the reviewers wanted—a terrifyingly pitiful unfolding of the effect of remorse, fear and despair. For it is not the murders themselves that destroy her. Her "Where is she now," her question about Lady Macduff, is not the anguished cry of so many other Lady Macbeths. Rather, this is her complaint about being left out of Macbeth's affairs. Her final words in the sleepwalking scene are calm and reasonable: "Come, come, come, come, give me your hand! What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed!" (V. i. 62-63). Those were good times for her, those moments after the murder when he had listened to her. She is not the grand, aridly remorseful creature of early *Macbeths*.

Jordan did create a modicum of regret at their downfall, for Macbeth's intrepidity and Lady Macbeth's cheerful graciousness do embitter the sweetness of the audience's response to their destruction. The closest the audience is likely to come to the

cathartic emotions of fear and pity is the moment of her death—and Jordan took an enormous risk to achieve the effect. He transposed the news of Birnam Wood to precede rather than immediately follow Lady Macbeth's death so that her suicide is Macbeth's direct motive for venturing out against superior forces almost certainly to be killed. But even more daringly, Jordan staged her suicide, a choice the critics almost universally deplored. The text in its ambiguity offers justifications for most of Jordan's interpretations; for this one he went beyond the text. Mullins' Lady runs in, embraces Macbeth, draws his knife from behind his belt and stabs herself. Only with her death before his eyes can Macbeth shed his usual rationality, allowing his emotion to elicit an empathetic response in both the onstage and theater audience. Her death and what he has done to bring it on are terrifying and pitiable because of her presence and his anguish. With Mullins' characterization, the choice of Lady Macbeth's suicide in full view is the only possibility if that ambivalent regret is what Jordan wanted. Macbeth's murderous acts cause him no distress—but the loss of his queen cuts his final tie with life. Immediately after, he exclaims, "Arm, arm, and out!" (V. v. 46).

Another of Jordan's transpositions points the last act towards its smashing climax, the death of Macbeth. Shakespeare, no doubt for his own good reasons,¹⁶ interposes an anti-climax, Ross' report to Siward of his son's death, after the battle between Macbeth and Macduff but before Macduff brings on Macbeth's head. Jordan places the Siward segment before rather than after this battle. Moments after the fight and Macbeth's death onstage, the English and Scots forces rush in. Jordan, to make sure the audience understands that the blood lust is not Macbeth's alone, called for a culminating *coup de théâtre*. The Scots hack away at the body slumped against the downstage front wall (from most vantage points the audience would see only the gestures of a mass of men without seeing Macbeth's body)—and suddenly the head flies across the stage.¹⁷ Since the flying head was excised after the previews (while the hacking remained), Rich could not understand the reason for "the visually obstructed death scene." The reason, it seems, was to give the ordinary Scots an opportunity to show how savage they could be, to make their bloody hands the last image. Jordan's is an elegant solution to the folio's two contradictory stage directions, one that has Macbeth killed on stage at the end of their fight (TLN 2477; V. vii), and another that has them exit fighting and then has Macduff return with Macbeth's head (TLN 2504; V. vii).

After the mutilation, the last speeches were enthusiastic. Rich faulted the ending for its "rah rah" heedlessness. He wanted the

victorious characters to remain sorrowful in the wake of the evil they have now extinguished, but that interpretation belongs in a different production. For all these Scots' ebullience, the audience remain unsure that virtuous rule will prevail in the future. Malcolm responded smugly to his elevation as Prince of Cumberland (I. iv) and, as usual, it is difficult to hear his self-conviction when he tests Macduff (IV. iii) without retaining some memory of those supposedly pretended stains of character and without recalling Macduff's easy acceptance of his future king's lechery and avarice. The mood in the audience is apt to contrast ironically with the mood of Jordan's Scots.

The director mastered all the elements: he managed blocking, stage business, and the other means at his disposal to clarify the play for the audience and to illuminate the text, and, most importantly, he developed, with the help of his Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, the witches, and the rest, characterizations that added up to an intellectually stimulating instance of *Macbeth* in performance. Even the most rabidly opposed reviewers agreed that the language was unusually clear, that they could understand the words. To accomplish this feat, the actors had to understand the play and their roles: this lucidity is not simply a matter of enunciation and is impossible without a coherent idea of what the play means. Reviewers failed to connect the clarity with the ideas Jordan developed.

Reviewers yearn to be wrenched by Macbeth's anguish, to lay at least three-quarters of the blame on the witches and Lady Macbeth, to be awed by the power of the supernatural but pre-eminently by sublime souls larger than life. But that production of the play is impossible so long as we consider murderous ambition to be ugly, base, and, ultimately, banal. Productions like the Public's that try to break through standard images of the play not only expand its meaning but also demonstrate that previous visions of the play are also constructions and are not sacrosanct.

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Notes

I use the term "Jordan" to indicate the meaning I perceive in the production, which may or may not be what the director intended; I discuss the inferences to be drawn from the performances I observed. Credits: A New York Shakespeare Festival Production: Joseph Papp presents *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, directed by Richard Jordan, with Scott Allegrucci, Daniel Berkey, Jesse Bernstein, Larry Bryggman, Reg E. Cathey, William Converse-Roberts, Joseph Costa, Peter Jay Fernandez, Thomas Gibson, Mark Hammer, Harriet Harris, Katherine Hiler,

Raul Julia, Rob LaBelle, Christopher McHale, Melinda Mullins, Harry S. Murphy, Gabriel Olds, Rene Rivera, Stephen Rowe, Jeanne Sakata, Laura Sametz, Matt Bradford Sullivan, Daniel von Bargen, Mary Louise Wilson. Set design by John Conklin, costume design by Jeanne Button, lighting design by Brian Gale, music composed by Daniel Schreier, fight director Peter Nels, casting by Rosemary Tichler and Nancy Piccione, associate producer Jason Steven Cohen. January 1990 at the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theater. A much shorter version of this paper appears in Bernice W. Kliman, *Macbeth* (Manchester: Univ. of Manchester Press, 1992), pp. 144-46.

²William A. Raidy, "'Macbeth' couples evil with its human effects," *Star Ledger* (17 Jan. 1990), pp. 4-5.

³Except where the folio text is cited, quotations are from the *Macbeth*, ed. Alfred Harbage, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), the text used for the production. The play was first published, of course, in the 1623 folio, for which I cite Charleton Hinman, ed., *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare* (New York: Norton, 1968), and its Through Line Numbers (TLN), followed after a semi-colon by the folio act and scene number.

⁴See Kalman Burnim, "Eighteenth-Century Theatrical Illustrations in the Light of Contemporary Developments," *Theatre Notebook*, 14 (1959-60), 45-55, especially p. 50.

⁵See "Continuation of a Curse," *New York Post* (17 Jan. 1990). The press department at the Public Theater provided the press clippings, most of them unpaginated. I include the publication and date in the body of the paper with the page numbers when they are available.

⁶*Shakespearean Tragedy* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian, 1963, rpt. from 1904), p. 272.

⁷Theobald's discussion of *weird* may be found in *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: Macbeth*, ed. Horace Howard Furness, with a Supplementary Bibliography by Louis Marder (New York: American Scholar, 1963, rpt. from 1873 ed.), pp. 37-38. The folio has *weyard* three times, by Banquo once (TLN 983; III. i) and by Macbeth twice (TLN 1416; III. iv, and 1686; IV. i). The folio refers to the women as *weyard* three times, by the witches themselves (TLN 130; I. iii), by Macbeth in his letter (TLN 355; I. v), and by Banquo (TLN 596; II. i).

⁸For the chronicles, see John Bellenden, trans. 1531, *The Chronicles of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece*, ed. Edith C. Batho and H. Winifred Husbands, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Text Society, 1941), vol. 2, pp. 149-50; Raphael Holinshed, *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, 6 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1965, rpt. from 1808 ed.), vol. 5, pp. 268-69. Most likely, the Holinshed was Shakespeare's primary source.

⁹The following act, scene and line numbers are from Marvin Spevack, ed. *The Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974), which is keyed to the *Riverside Shakespeare: TGV*, I. ii. 57, *Err.* IV. iv. 4, *Ado.* II. i. 62, *LLL*, III. i. 179, *R2*, II. i. 142, *R3*, I. iii. 29 and IV. iv. 169, *Rom.* IV. ii. 47, *Mac.* III. v. 11, *Oth.* III. iii. 292. *Pericles*, which does not, of course, appear in the first folio, also has two instances of *wayward* in IV. iv. 10 and V. i. 89. *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* have one instance each, lines 344 and 1095, respectively.

¹⁰I do not mean to imply that if there were parallels the text would not be indeterminate. But in this instance, indeterminacy should be obvious even to those who ordinarily think otherwise.

¹¹Tony Vellela, "Raul Julia in the Scottish Play," *Theater Week* (22 January 1990), pp. 18-20, especially 20.

¹²See Vellela, p. 18, Helen Dudar, "A *Macbeth* without the Wimp Factor," *The New York Times* (14 Jan. 1990), pp. H5 and 39, and Linda Winer, "Macho 'Macbeth,' with Raul Julia," *Newsday* (17 Jan. 1990), p. 117.

¹³Mrs. Pritchard began acting with Garrick in 1748, and he never played Macbeth again with another actor, declining to play the role after her retirement in 1768. See Margaret Barton, *Garrick* (New York: Macmillan, 1949), pp. 61, 92. Kemble performed regularly with Siddons from 1788. Faucit played in the mid-nineteenth century. Irving and Terry played near the end of the nineteenth century. Details of these performances can be found in Rosenberg, *passim*.

¹⁴Both William Hazlitt and Anna Jameson base their analyses of Lady Macbeth on Siddons' performance. Through these writers and others the actor's interpretation entered the mainstream of Shakespearean interpretation. See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), pp. 155-56.

¹⁵Since the queen does not respond at all to Banquo's and Macbeth's dialogue about Banquo's ride, and since she later asks a servant "Is *Banquo* gone from Court" (TLN 1152; III. ii), we may infer that she has not heard them and therefore may have exited early, before Macbeth dismisses the court. It is a commonplace of modern productions, however, to use Macbeth's dismissal of his court (TLN 1028-32) as an opportunity to dismiss her also and thus show the rupture in their union caused by the murder of Duncan. Early productions avoided an overt breach between the husband and wife.

¹⁶James L. Calderwood, *If It Were Done: Macbeth and Tragic Action* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1986), offers a persuasive reason: Siward's acceptance of his son's death, his refusal to seek revenge, his "conclusive 'His knell is knolled'" (p. 113) all point to "certain gestures" Shakespeare makes at the end "to suggest a resolution of violence" (p. 112) just before Macduff brings on the play's final violent image, Macbeth's head. But since many productions cut the Siward segment altogether, even those that want to suggest a resolution of violence, the use of it that Calderwood discovers does not seem to be easy to convey theatrically.

¹⁷Shakespeare used such bloody theatrical heads as early as *Titus Andronicus* (1594), according to Alan Hughes, "*Titus Andronicus* at the Globe," a paper presented at the conference "New Issues in the Reconstruction of Shakespeare's Theater," Athens, Georgia, 16-18 February 1990.

The Terrorism of Macbeth and Charles Manson: Reading Cultural Construction in Polanski and Shakespeare by Bryan Reynolds

Shortly after midnight on August 9, 1969, as instructed by cult ("family") leader Charles Manson, Susan Atkins, Linda Kasabian, Katie Krenwinkel, and Charles Watson unlawfully entered the Hollywood Hills estate of director Roman Polanski and his movie star wife, Sharon Tate. To promote "Helter Skelter," a horrific scheme designed by Manson to effect ultimately a worldwide racial war ending in a white elite ruling over a black population, the four Manson family members set out to rob and murder brutally the inhabitants of the Polanski residence. Steven Parent, a friend of the estate's caretaker, was the first to die. As Parent attempted to leave the property in his car, he was suddenly, and in short order, shot, stabbed and killed by Watson. Then, while Kasabian kept a lookout for people coming at the end of the driveway, Atkins, Krenwinkel and Watson invaded the house, forced its occupants at knife-point into the living room, tied them together with nylon rope by their necks, and began stabbing and shooting them to death. One hundred and two stab wounds scattered the mangled corpses of Abigail Folger, Voityck Frykowski, Jay Sebring, and Sharon Tate, who was eight and a half months pregnant with her and Polanski's first child. When the assassins completed their mission, they returned to Manson, who was waiting for them at a bar.

In the Spring of 1970, Roman Polanski decided to make a cinematic adaptation of *Macbeth*, his first film since the 1969 tragedy. Already internationally acclaimed for an assortment of cryptic and macabre films that culminated in the critical and financial success of *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), Polanski, together with friend Andrew Braunsberg, had little difficulty forming a company to produce *Macbeth*. Well-known critic (and originator of the nude-play, *Oh! Calcutta!*) Kenneth Tynan collaborated with Polanski in writing the screenplay, and *Playboy* owner Hugh Hefner agreed to fund the project. The rather unexpected and provocative production relationship of Hefner, Tynan and Polanski, the nudity and unbridled and gruesome violence in the film, and especially the film's association with recent events, along with a variety of less conspicuous factors, all caused *Macbeth* to be extremely controversial and surprisingly popular for a cinematic version of Shakespeare.

Polanski's *Macbeth*, like Shakespeare's play, reflects complex circumstances particular to the cultural environment from which it emerged; hence from the moment of its conception, the film has been interpreted, almost invariably, in relation to its topicality. It is my aim here to show that while *Macbeth* is a recognizable product of its day, and commentary on a fantastic and influential period in the history of the United States, it also constitutes a self-conscious terrorist action of social and political intervention into a discursive cultural and ideological struggle. Polanski's *Macbeth* brings to a critical juncture the philosophies of the 1960's peace/love/revolution hippies, Vietnam war protesters and civil rights activists, the reified mainstream American populace and the ruling conservatives, as well as the pervasive preoccupation with aestheticization. *Macbeth* does this under the auspices of a conservative Shakespearean tradition as it simultaneously appropriates and reevaluates Shakespeare's axiomatic stature.

Macbeth was rated "R": for the first time Shakespeare was restricted to people seventeen years of age or older unless accompanied by an adult. The cultural icon, Shakespeare, who had been held traditionally as a symbol of human greatness and poetic genius for all mankind, but really the hero of the so-called cultivated intelligentsia, was now not only restricted culturally to those allegedly possessing the special ability to understand and appreciate Shakespeare, but also, via Polanski, restricted by law to those of an age presumed less susceptible to Shakespeare's adulterating, traumatizing, or terrorizing potential. Shakespeare came to stand for something modern and ominous. Hailed by the press prior to its release as ingenious, obscene and bloody, *Macbeth* was viewed by an audience with a peculiar horizon of expectations. By writing to magazines across the country, for instance, some "Shakespeare lovers" even attempted to inspire a national boycott of the film.¹

The public's generally heterogeneous responses to certain aspects of *Macbeth* are eclipsed by the Manson murders as a focus for interpretation. Every review of *Macbeth* of which I am aware makes reference to the butchery of Polanski's wife and unborn child and friends. To quote a few: Roger Ebert says that "it is impossible to watch certain scenes without thinking of the Charles Manson case. It is impossible to watch a film directed by Roman Polanski and not react on more than one level to such images as a baby 'untimely ripped from his mother's womb';"² Paul Zimmerman points out that "parallels between the Manson murders and the mad, bloody acts of these lost Macbeths keep pressing themselves on the viewer";³ and Kenneth Rothwell notices that "hovering in the background, obscuring the Bard slightly, were the

gruesomeness of the Manson cult murders . . . and the new interest in witchcraft [shades of James I!], helped along by Polanski's own 'Rosemary's Baby'"⁴—a chilling movie about a woman whose husband involves her in a witchcraft cult and uses her body against her will to carry and give birth to the child of Satan. *Rosemary's Baby*, and many other of the 1960's horror films, mirror the revival of interest in witchcraft and occultism during the decade (as recently depicted in Oliver Stone's film *The Doors* [1991]). Leslie Fiedler writes at the end of the 1960's:

But not until recently has there reappeared a growing sect of witches ["whether in the interests of black mysticism, practical magic, women's liberation, or some combination of the three"], propagandizing, proselytizing, committing what seem to alien and unsympathetic eyes atrocities, mass orgies, and ritual murders, in order to establish their identity and express their contempt for the nonwitch world. Once more witchcraft has moved from the occasional Sunday supplement to daily headlines, becoming, as it was in Shakespeare's day, news and the stuff of living literature.⁵

There was in fact also a resurgence of interest in witchcraft and occultism in Elizabethan and Jacobean England.

In 1563, when Queen Elizabeth I passed her statute against "Conjurations, Enchantments, and Withcrafts," there was more excitement and more concern associated with witchcraft than ever before in England's history.⁶ There seems to have been a definite correlation between the newfangled treatment of witchcraft and the return of 472 exiled Protestant leaders who had witnessed witch burnings in Europe. Nevertheless, theological extremists of both left and right, Calvinists and Romanists, were dedicated to battling the Devil and his witches. Unlike Elizabeth, who was troubled chiefly with the treasonous implications of witchcraft as practiced by nobility and/or employed for political prophecy (as the witches vaticinate in Shakespeare and Polanski), the religious figures perceived witchcraft and pagans, just as 1960's' conservatives perceived recreational drug use and the diversified 1960's' counterculture, as encroaching threats to the ethical and sanctified fabric of human existence.

James I shared both Elizabeth's apprehension over political sorcery and prognostication, and the common dread of witchcraft as heretical and subversive. After James was crowned King of the united realms of Scotland and England (1603), he imposed in a new witchcraft statute (1604) more austere punishments for the same offenses delineated in the earlier act.⁷ Beginning in 1590, with his

purported firsthand encounter with a satanic conspiracy, James became increasingly enthralled with witchcraft. In 1597, he published for the first time his own monograph on witchcraft, entitled *Daemonologie*, which was mainly an effort to refute Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584). Scot's book discusses witchcraft and the evidence presented at witch trials with strong skepticism: according to Scot, "My question is not (as manie fondlie suppose) whether there be witches or naie, but whether they can doo such miraculous works as are imputed to them."⁸ Scot believed in the existence of witches but not in the corporeal relationship between witches and the spiritual force of Evil perpetuated by the Devil and his demons that was very much a reality for James. James thought *Daemonologie* such an important work that he republished it in London in 1603, 1604, 1607, and 1616. And, in 1603, he demanded that all copies of Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* be burned, though many copies survived.

James' early bout with the infamous North Berwick Witches occurred a few years after his succession to the Scottish throne (1587). Dr. John Fian was accused in 1590 of being the ringleader of a coven of treasonous witch-terrorists (as Charles Manson was frequently described in the media after his arrest). Based on one girl's confession, which was forced from her by torture, Fian and several other people, mostly women, were arraigned for, among other evils, conspiring with Satan to cause the wreck of the ship carrying King James to Norway to fetch his future queen. The contemporary pamphlet, *Newes From Scotland* (1591), records that after undergoing a series of excruciating tortures, such as those inflicted on Fian: "thrawing of his head with a roape," "his nails vpon all his fingers were riuen and pulled off," "the most seuer and cruell paine in the world, called the bootes," which caused his legs to be "crushte and beaten together as small as might bee, and the bones and flesh so brused, that the bloud and marrowe spouted forth in great abundance,"⁹ everyone of the accused confessed but Fian, who was nonetheless executed like the others. Of the torturing, confessions, and trials, all of which were supervised by James, it was the marvelous declaration of confessed-witch Agnis Sampson that affected James the greatest:

. . . she declared vnto him the verye woordes which passed betwene the Kings Maiestie and his Queene at Vpslo in Norway the first night of their marriage, with their answeere eache to other: whereat the Kinges Maiestie wondered greatlye, and swore by liuing God, that he beleueed that all the Deuils in hell could not haue discovered the same: acknowledging her woordes to be most true, and therefore gaue more credit to the [confessions of the] rest which is before declared.¹⁰

James became a relatively firm believer in demonic human agency, and his belief in both witches and sorcerers and the necessity of their extermination was reflected in the hundreds of witch hunts and witch trials performed throughout his reign.¹¹ In a letter to his dear friend Robert Cecil, Viscount Cranborne (1605), James alludes to the predicament: "My little beagle . . . I have been out of privy intelligence with you since my last parting for having been ever kept so busy with hunting witches."¹²

In the midst of England's witch craze, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was written (between 1603-1606) and performed, among other places, in the presence of King James.¹³ To perform a play during the English Renaissance and especially before royalty was an enterprise not to be taken lightly, for overtly politically offensive material could yield such harsh punishments as imprisonment, bodily mutilation or even death.¹⁴ Shakespeare, however, seems to have considered more than censorship when formulating *Macbeth*; *Macbeth* seems to be a straightforward appeal to James' sensibilities. Apart from the connection between the current witch craze and *Macbeth*, the play's political topicality and allegiance to James are exemplified by its allusions to the Gunpowder Plot, which was a conspiracy to blow up the English Parliament and James on November 5, 1605. The Porter's sarcastic discussion of equivocation (II. iii. 7-12) and the reference to the hanging of traitors (IV. ii. 46), as Kenneth Muir observes, "were presumably written after the trial of Father Garnet (28 March 1606) for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot," but before the play was performed at Hampton Court for James on August 7, 1606.¹⁵ A notable deviation from Shakespeare's main source, Holinshed's *Chronicles of Scotland*, reveals another obvious effort to please James: James' ancestor, Banquo, is not depicted as Macbeth's conspiratorial accomplice as recorded by Holinshed.¹⁶ Yet nevertheless Shakespeare does include the implication that Banquo's descendants "shall govern the Scottish kingdome by long order of continuall descent" (cf. Shakespeare, IV. i. 111-124),¹⁷ and since James was a proud father with high hopes for his children, as illustrated by his *Basilikon Doron* (written for his son Prince Henry), he probably appreciated this allusion to his lineage. Superseding these somewhat superficial alliances or concessions are the far more significant social and political connotations of Shakespeare's witches, particularly as their relevance is refigured in Polanski's *Macbeth*.

"I show people something so obviously impossible as witchcraft," states Polanski in a 1971 interview, "and I say to them, 'Are you certain it is not true?' Too many people accept things for certainty. . . . I want people to question certainties."¹⁸ But why does Polanski want people to "question certainties"? Why choose

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“something so obviously impossible as witchcraft” as the questionable subject matter? Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of the complex, strategic and elusive network of power-knowledge relations integral to the assemblage and maintenance of most social structures reverberates in Stephen Greenblatt’s provocative assertion that “one of the highest achievements of power is to impose fictions upon the world and one of its supreme pleasures is to enforce the acceptance of fictions that are known to be fictions.”¹⁹ The thematic parallelism between Greenblatt’s statement and Polanski’s proclaimed intentions encourages inquiry into the actual role played by Polanski’s *Macbeth* in the distribution of power and cultural anxiety. Regardless of whether Shakespeare shared Polanski’s motivation, for a Jacobean audience living in a world in which witchcraft was believed a terrible reality, the conceivability of *Macbeth* must have been frightening. Did Polanski want his audience to experience a comparable reality? If so, for what purpose?

Alleged Renaissance witches and sorcerers, usually women, were normally people with unconventional characteristics. Like the participants of the eclectic 1960’s’ counterculture, they may have been weird or rebellious in their demeanor or ideas, introverted, conventionally unattractive, or socially stigmatized for any number of reasons; they may have even in their inmost self-consciousness considered themselves witches. The following lyrics of Manson speak for many (like Manson) who have had eccentricity biologically and/or socially thrust upon them, but (unlike Manson) are unjustly persecuted for their idiosyncrasies:

People say I’m no good
 But never never do they say
 Why their world is so mixed up
 Or how it got that way
 They all look at me and they frown
 Do I really look so strange
 If they really dug down in themselves
 I know they’d want to change
 Everybody says you’re no good
 ‘Cause you don’t do like they think you should.²⁰

Essentially, people charged with witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean England were seen either as threats because of their differences, their inexplicable and/or intolerable power, or as expendable and necessary scapegoats serving diversified purposes, all designed to foster harmony among more conventional members of society and strengthen the overall patriarchal power structure.

Both Polanski's film and Shakespeare's play invite their audiences to question the dangers of the unconventionalities represented by their witches. Actually, they both appear to be trying to affirm the existence of witchcraft and augment the terror associated with this possibility. The supernatural powers and magic potions used by the witches of Polanski and Shakespeare reinforce analogically conservative conceptions of the dangers of alternative life-styles and marginalized people. Characteristic of these conceptions are the fears of adulteration and identification (Manson said to the public in his trial testimony: "I am just a reflection of every one of you");²¹ and Polanski and Shakespeare demonstrate a theatrical realization of these fears with their witches. As Terry Eagleton puts it in his astute analysis of *Macbeth*:

As the most fertile force in the play, the witches inhabit an anarchic, richly ambiguous zone both in and out of official society: they live in their own world but intersect with Macbeth's. They are poets, prophetesses and devotees of a female cult, radical separatists who scorn male power. Their words and bodies mock rigorous boundaries and make sport of fixed positions. But official society can only ever imagine its radical 'other' as chaos rather than creativity, and is thus bound to define the sisters as evil.²²

Macbeth exists in a patriarchal world, from another era as well as fictitious, but not a world so ideologically dissimilar from the patriarchal America of the 1960's and today. Macbeth's story is a tragedy of naive curiosity and malevolence; it is the story of a well-bred individual and symbol of masculine authority undermined by the enchantments of a satanic counterculture. Macbeth is not only captivated by the witches' prognostications, but he also succumbs to them. Macbeth's demonic captivation and addiction to ambition cause him to kill and be killed.

The witches are therefore effective subverters of the social order; they are indirectly responsible for the demise of the state of Scotland, and in Polanski, they might also stand for 1960's' arts, drugs, and countercultural politics gone too far. They show that counterculture will intervene, corrupt and destroy the established social structure if not controlled or crushed. Polanski's *Macbeth* was not alone in its apparent sentiments towards counterculture, specifically occultism, hippiedom and feminism. There were numerous films (such as John Wayne's *The Green Berets* [1968] and Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* [1971]) and television programs (such as the space-hippie "The Way to Eden" episode of *Star Trek* [1969]) which were hostile towards and mocked counterculture at

the time. To provide a mainstream literary example, a 1969 *Time Magazine* article entitled "New Feminists: Revolt against Sexism" describes the consciousness-raising groups of the "new feminists" as meeting in "covens."²³ Although the article makes no mention of them, there was in fact a national militant guerrilla-theater squad called WITCH: Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell. Many countercultural groups (like the Manson family) promulgated an affinity for witchcraft and occultism, but hardly any protested or committed crimes in their names.

Charles Manson and his followers have been recurrently portrayed by journalists, talk-show hosts, politicians, and various spokespeople, as an inevitable consequence of the drugs and debauchery of the radical sixties. Macbeth is similarly described by Macduff and Malcolm as influenced or possessed by a presumably already existing "Devil" and "Evil" (cf. IV. iii). Consider journalist Joan Didion's recount of the historical moment:

On August 9, 1969, I was sitting in the shallow end of my sister-in-law's swimming pool in Beverly Hills when she received a telephone call from a friend who had just heard about the murders at Sharon Tate Polanski's house on Cielo Drive. . . . Black masses were imagined, and bad trips blamed. I remember all of the day's misinformation very clearly, and I also remember this, and I wish I did not: *I remember that no one was surprised*. . . . Many people I know in Los Angeles believe that the Sixties ended abruptly on August 9, 1969, ended at the exact moment when word of the murders on Cielo Drive traveled like brushfire through the community, and in a sense this is true. The tension broke that day. The paranoia was fulfilled.²⁴

Conservatives said "I told you so" and blamed a supposedly ignorant population for making the heinous crimes possible. They claimed that preventive measures should have been taken; stricter drug laws should have been enforced; someone should have cracked down on the "hippie-freaks": as King Duncan permits the infiltration (through Macbeth) of the witches, the devil, and evil into his Scottish realm, the American populace allegedly brought Manson upon themselves. And if the public was not responsible, who was? Some people even had the audacity to suggest that Polanski and Tate somehow inspired the murders.

The murders were reviewed originally in light of Polanski's films. Movie critic Pauline Kael recalls remorsefully:

Even though we knew that Roman Polanski had nothing whatever to do with causing the murder of his wife and

unborn child and friends, the massacre seemed a vision realized from his nightmare movies.²⁵

Prosecutor of the Tate-LaBianca trials and co-author of *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*, Vincent Bugliosi, writes:

In the news stories following the Tate murders, reporters were quick to note that in *Repulsion* [an earlier Polanski film] Miss Deneuve went mad and murdered two men, while in *Cul de Sac* [Polanski's first international hit] the inhabitants of an isolated castle each meet a bizarre fate until only one man is left alive [as the caretaker remained alive at the Polanski residence, which was coincidentally located in a *cul de sac*].²⁶

Outraged, Polanski says in an interview:

There's no way out, is there? What happened was reviewed in terms of my films. Now it's vice versa. Now my films are reviewed in terms of what happened. If I did a comedy, aha!²⁷

When details were made known about the extravagance of Polanski's personal life and the drugs discovered on the Polanski premises after the murders, along with the information that two of the victims, Folger and Frykowski, had a substantial amount of the hallucinatory drug MDA in their systems when they were murdered, the press shifted responsibility for the murders onto the victims. Rumors of Polanski's own satanism and associated perverted practices performed at his home also contributed to the blame-the-victims conception. After all, for most people, this information aligned Polanski and his friends with the feared counterculture. Polanski remembers:

It was a modern version of a superstition story. Suddenly Sharon became responsible for her own death. The press was despicable. They talked about orgies at the house, sadism. They sensationalized something that was already sensational. . . . It is like the story of the beautiful girl in the village. It's alright [sic] with villagers as long as there's no hoof-and-mouth disease. But once an epidemic breaks out, she's blamed.²⁸

It was not "alright," however, to be different in Elizabethan and Jacobean England despite any calamitous occurrence or the existence of anything pernicious, such as "hoof-and-mouth disease." The opening statement made by Thomas Dekker, William

Rowley, and John Ford's dramatic characterization of Elizabeth Sawyer, who was convicted of witchcraft and executed on the scaffold at Tyburn in 1621, bespeaks the severity of this social situation:

And why on me? why should the envious world
 Throw all their scandalous malice upon me?
 'Cause I am poor, deform'd and ignorant,
 And like a Bow buckl'd and bent together,
 By some more strong in mischiefs then myself?
 Must I for that be made a common sink,
 For all the filth and rubbish of Men's tongues
 To fall and run into? Some call me Witch;
 And being ignorant of myself, they go
 About to teach me how to be one: urging,
 That my bad tongue [by their bad usage made so]
 Forespeaks their Cattle, doth bewitch their Corn,
 Themselves, their Servants, and their Babes at nurse.

(*The Witch of Edmonton*, I. ii. 1-14)²⁹

Elizabeth Sawyer was a "poor, deform'd and ignorant" woman and she paid with her life for being in such an involuntary state of disenfranchisement. Similarly, as far as the majority of America was concerned, it was not "alright" to be different, it was not "alright" to be a member of any countercultural group in the 1960's. As English Renaissance women were accused of witchcraft and held accountable for almost anything that had gone wrong in the community, Polanski and Tate were held responsible for an atrocity that was not even intended for them (Manson was not aware that Polanski was renting the house at the time).

There was a definite blurring of borders between theatricalized terrorism and Manson's real-life terrorism. An imaginary correlation was fabricated between art and reality. The horror of the reality of the Manson murders became something apprehensible and familiar, however elided, displaced, or reconstructed. The commodification of this horror was symptomatic as a culmination of its particular styles of aestheticization and fetishization. It was transformed into journalistic capital, which desensitizes through sensationalism and tautological reproduction. It quickly acquired gossip status, and it was reproduced and distorted in a variety of artistic and animated forms (such as in paintings, sketches, comic-strips, posters, songs and on t-shirts).³⁰ This aestheticization converted the once empathy-arousing nature of that horror into a fetish for popular consumption. Yet, in a strange way, Polanski's *Macbeth* seems to frustrate and reverse this process. By re-aestheticizing the horror in an extraordinary manner, *Macbeth* aspires to re-sensitize its audience by de-reifying the horror as

commodity-fetish. It does this by creating a cinematic "Theater of Cruelty."

Antonin Artaud claims that the "Theater of Cruelty" breaks through the barriers typically constructed by theatricalization; it no longer permits its audience the opportunity to suspend disbelief willingly or to become mere "Peeping Toms" passively observing an imitation of events which are usually distressing.³¹ Theater of Cruelty makes "theater a believable reality which gives the heart and the senses that kind of concrete bite which all true sensation requires."³² To put it another way, as Polanski expressively professes: "If you don't show violence the way it is. If you don't show it realistically, then that's immoral and harmful. If you don't upset people, then that's obscenity."³³ Like the unavoidable historical and cultural situation of Polanski's *Macbeth*, Theater of Cruelty should concentrate "around famous personages," such as Shakespeare, Polanski, Tate and Manson, and "atrocious crimes," such as the Manson murders and the Vietnam war, and "superhuman devotions," such as witchcraft and the Manson family's commitment to Helter Skelter.³⁴ Because "images of a crime presented in the requisite theatrical conditions" of the Theater of Cruelty can realistically involve the audience, says Artaud, the images are "infinitely more terrible for the spirit than that same crime when actually committed."³⁵ In the words of Polanski, "art starts being art when it moves you, when it involves you. Art is involving an audience through aesthetic technique."³⁶ The historical and cultural situation for a film version of *Macbeth* directed by Roman Polanski was perfect for a Theater of Cruelty, and Polanski took ample advantage of the circumstances. Whether one sees, as Kael claims, "the Manson murders in this *Macbeth* because the director has put them there,"³⁷ or because one wants them to be there, they are there nonetheless.

Although Shakespeare's *Macbeth* neither calls for nor seems to solicit theatrical representations of the dreadful murders of Duncan and his attendants, nor of the murders of anyone in Macduff's castle other than his boy, Polanski's film includes all of these heinous murders and many more. Cruelty and bloodshed abound. From the very beginning of *Macbeth*, its *mise en scene* is terrorizing, and this terror is progressively intensified until manifested in full-blown terrorism. The opening sequence of close-ups showing three witches covertly burying a severed arm, a dagger and a noose, then pouring blood over the covered hole gives the film a mysterious and frightening aura, an obscure sense of irrationality. Moreover, the sight of three witches probably caused an audience already looking for Manson nostalgia in the film to recall the three female family members (Susan Atkins, Leslie Van Houten and

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Patricia Krenwinkel) convicted with Manson in the same case: all three of these murderers wore jean jackets embroidered with the insignia "Devil's Witches, Devil's Hole, Death Valley" and were commonly referred to as witches and Devil worshippers in the media.³⁸ The potent and clandestine ambiguity of this introduction and spell-casting session is quickly complemented by two sanguinary scenes portentous in nature. First, the audience is forced to witness a mute soldier discover and pitilessly bludgeon (loudly!) a wounded enemy soldier who was feigning death on the cold and clammy beach-battlefield; secondly, a man is shown (the Captain in Shakespeare), with blood dripping down every crevice of his ragged face, enthusiastically telling Duncan the gory details of Macbeth's "Valour" (I. ii. 19): the Captain announces that Macbeth "unseam'd" the enemy leader, Macdonwald, "from the nave to th' chops, / And fix'd his head upon our battlements" (I. ii. 22-23).

The audience is given in these initial sequences its first tastes of the terror and the terrorism to come. Terrorism, meaning systematic covert warfare to produce terror for political coercion, such as the calculated violence perpetrated by an airplane hijacker and the bomber of innocent citizens and (supposedly) the Manson murders,³⁹ is frequently performed on the stage and on the screen. Terrorism is thus aestheticized, theatricalized, objectified, commodified and occasionally criticized. Consequently, these theatrical implementations or representations (depending on their efficacy) of terrorism are usually at the expense of the terror immediately related to the act. As Anthony Kubiak eloquently puts it:

Here we are faced with a paradox, however, because in performance what cannot be articulated must be shown, and when it is shown, it ceases to be what it was. Thus when terror enters the information systems of performance, it ceases, in a sense, to be terror—which is unspeakable, and unrepresentable—and becomes a mask of itself. Terror is transformed into the imaging system of terrorism.⁴⁰

Theatrical terrorism is seemingly always already theoretical; it is to add an *ism* to terror, to transform terror into an ideological event. It becomes ideological inasmuch as it is no longer terror (that which cannot enter freely into language), but is now a politicized and coercive action. This terrorism, at the very least, simply endeavors to force the audience into accepting its authenticity as it displaces the necessarily camouflaged terror that may have stimulated its existence.

In other words, as Elaine Scarry says, the pain of terror, as we human beings experience it, is ordinarily unthinkable, incommunicable, and ineffable as a result of its relative inexpressibility and our individual subjectivity. Terror, like pain, is a phenomenon that resists verbal objectification: it is typically unsignifiable. Therefore, as pain is commonly misrepresented and supplanted hermeneutically by what appears to be its physical signification (as depicted by a bodily wound or symptomatic behavior), so is terror affected by the tangibility of terrorism.⁴¹ For terror to maintain its terrific and tyrannical power, terrorism is regularly and often effectively portrayed theatrically and figuratively by allusion or as a conspicuous absence. We learn secondhand of its source, or its conclusion, as with the murder of Duncan in Shakespeare's version of *Macbeth*, yet our imagination is compelled, whether consciously or not, to improvise, to account for what we ourselves neither saw nor experienced. And it is in this void, because of our inevitable inability to supplement realistically what we cannot know, that a vigil of fear, a conundrum of terror thrives within us. Whereas most straightforward theatrical terrorism in effect fails to tap this fear because its displacement of terror allows for observer-rejection, the Theater of Cruelty does not. It is never theoretical. It instead pretends to confer the option of rejection to the audience, and it is this believed illusion of an imaginary option that permits the Theater of Cruelty to strike its audience surreptitiously in a way that is intensely emotional and deeply disturbing.

While Polanski's *Macbeth* incorporates all the necessary ingredients for a realization of Artaud's Theater of Cruelty, it is difficult to determine whether a Jacobean production of *Macbeth* could ever have constituted a Theater of Cruelty. The Jacobean productions of *Macbeth*, comparable to Polanski's film, seem to have operated in an appropriate cultural setting for a Theater of Cruelty, and Shakespeare's text undoubtedly contains the requisite substance and framework. Apart from the noted allusions to famous personages (James and his ancestors), atrocious crimes (witchcraft and political prophecy: heresy and treason) and superhuman devotions (occultism and regal aspirations, such as the Gunpowder Plot), Shakespeare includes regicide (which may have been staged, but probably not in front of James), he emphasizes the innocence of those who are murdered (e.g. I. vii. 21-25), he has a young boy ruthlessly slain before his own mother ("He has kill'd me, mother" [IV. iii. 86]), he depicts the murder of an ancestor of royalty explicitly identified with James (Banquo), he reinforces beliefs in not only the existence and malevolence of witches but also in ghosts, the devil and evil, and he does all of these things in a play

literally saturated in blood (there are more references in *Macbeth* to blood and bleeding than in any other play by Shakespeare).

In much the same way that witchcraft was fetishized both during the English Renaissance and in the United States during the 1960's, bloody murder was certainly a popular topic in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. "Blood" and its derivatives were regularly employed (presumably) as an enticement for purchase in the titles of pamphlets about recent murders and, more often and numerous, in their contents. One of the most arresting and grotesque of the surviving murder pamphlets, the *Most Cruell and Bloody Murther Committed by an Inkeepers Wife* (1606), describes explicitly how a murderess, like the killers of Sharon Tate, murdered a pregnant woman: "shee ript her up the belly, making herselfe a tragicall midwife, or truly a muderesse, that brought an abortive babe into the world."⁴² The circulation of this pamphlet at a time when Shakespeare may have been writing or revising *Macbeth* (there are several known editions of the play) causes me to wonder whether Shakespeare had this specific and probably well-known murder case in mind when contriving certain lines, particularly: "Macduff was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripp'd" (V. viii. 15-16), and the Captain's account of Macbeth's martial prowess (I. ii. 19-22). More important is whether members of Shakespeare's audience would have recollected the murder case because of the potential allusions to it in the play, and what effects the association between the case and the play might have had on them. At any rate, the association may have made the likelihood and reality of barbarous murders, like the one committed by the Innkeeper's wife, more terrorizing.

Elizabethan and Jacobean tracts on witchcraft, witch hunts and witch trials were, perhaps, more fashionable than even the most scandalous and horrifying non-witchcraft murder pamphlets. Considering that *Macbeth* contains some of the most atrocious forms of murder imaginable and clearly implies (as in Hecate's speech [III. iv]) that the play's witches are ultimately to blame for the murders (and not the ambitiousness or wickedness of Macbeth or Lady Macbeth), it seems probable that the play influenced its audience's sentiments toward those mysterious and eccentric women living in their neighborhoods, particularly those women unlucky enough to have had circulating beforehand rumors of their witch status. Insofar as *Macbeth* was legitimated and made prestigious by its performance before King James, it also seems likely that the play possessed the power to perpetuate the transference and displacement of responsibility for crimes and other unfortunate circumstances onto these characteristically unusual members of society. In his essay "The Power of Evil," Manson explains:

An illusion to some may be a death reality to others. A play on stage may invoke madness somewhere else as it may circle the stage and be in the streets behind the stage plays—There are looks that kill and motions of a finger that can destroy much.⁴³

So, for some people the witches of *Macbeth* remain invariably within the safely contained, thespian world of illusion, yet for others the witches represent a horrible out-of-theater reality that threatens incessantly the ethical, physical and spiritual sanctity of human life. Indeed, the witches challenge that life itself. The power of theater is therefore not to be perceived frivolously, for this power may be a product of madness and other things, just as it may produce or reproduce madness and other things. Manson's understanding of the power of theater bethinks the controversial causality and potential ramifications of Polanski's wish to make people "question certainties," such as something "so obviously impossible as witchcraft."

Interestingly, no recourse is taken against the witches, in either Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or Polanski's adaptation. It seems, then, that the dangerous and crucial, and for some, gratifying task of plucking from society the dreadful witches and punishing them is left to the impressionable and socially responsible members of the audience. After all, it is not "so obviously impossible" that someone might have responded to a Jacobean performance of *Macbeth* by taking matters into his or her own hands. Many of the women persecuted for witchcraft in Elizabethan and Jacobean England were tortured and convicted predominately, if not wholly, on the testimony of one teenager. Notwithstanding those adults who sought inspiration and a rationalization to execute their authority and sadism (as there are many today), I can imagine a distraught teenager (like fourteen-year-old Anne Gunter who confessed in 1605 that she had feigned hysteria and falsely accused three witches),⁴⁴ after having been dragged by her parents to see a production of *Macbeth* at the Globe, returning to her community and charging someone with witchcraft, if only to vent her frustrations and receive attention. Today, of course, this is less likely, but it is not inconceivable that a cinematic Theater of Cruelty such as Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* (1991), with superstar and male-hero Robert De Niro as the charismatic psycho-rapist, might encourage violence against women from, say, some of those thousands of frustrated "wanna-be" De Niros in the world. In spite of Scorsese's repulsive use of Theater of Cruelty, the political and social potentialities of this dramatic tactic are limitless.

When Polanski's *Macbeth* mercilessly butchers King Duncan with a dagger, in a scene horrifically allusive to the Manson

murders, he repeatedly thrusts the blade in and out of Duncan's naked chest as Duncan pitifully looks with a desperate, aghast gaze. The series of close-ups shifting periodically from the faces of Macbeth and Duncan (from both of their viewpoints), to Duncan's bloody and lacerated body, and then to Duncan's crown as it slips from his grasp and awkwardly rolls to inertia, are very powerful. They trenchantly emphasize Duncan's vulnerability and innocence and Macbeth's guilt. But a close-up of Macbeth's con-founded and compunctious countenance immediately before he begins, however reluctantly, to hack Duncan illustrates what appears to be a profound lack of agency on his part in the crime. Akin to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, despite the absence of Hecate, Polanski's film leads its audience to believe that the crimes committed by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are brought about by the spells cast by the witches on the beach-battlefield and during their cabalistic sabbath.

After Polanski's Macbeth nervously descends into the dark and mysterious witches' lair, as if from the security and rectitude of his privileged masculine reality, he ingenuously participates in their arcane ceremony (as in Shakespeare, IV. i). Encompassed by dozens of naked hippie-looking witches of assorted ages and appearances (and I say hippie-looking because of their long disheveled hair, the style of their jewelry, and the nature of their gestures and dance), Macbeth willingly gulps down their magic drug-beverage (not in Shakespeare). He becomes part of an infamous and clandestine ritual that has been perceived as fascinating, terrifying, and titillating. Polanski proffers a film manifestation of the eroticized male fantasy of participation and centrality in an otherwise exclusively female society. Yet, as the mythologized male fear of annihilation by woman is often artistically represented, the witches bewitch and ruin Macbeth, and, via association, his wife too. They turn Macbeth on to an LSD-like trip, he experiences a phantasmagoria of enlightening and ghastly hallucinations, and decides to have Macduff's entire family and servants "Savagely slaughter'd" (IV. iii. 205). On enchanted drugs of ambition, Macbeth, like Charles Manson, is either demonically possessed or severely intoxicated, at the least.

Throughout the massacre at Macduff's castle, close-ups are again employed to stress the innocence of the victims and the terrorism of the episode. Unlike Shakespeare, who includes only one on-stage murder, that of Macduff's son, Polanski highlights five victims, just as there were five people murdered by the Manson devotees at his residence. The band of assassins first kill Macduff's (approximately seven year-old) son in front of his mother, and, like Duncan, the boy is naked (with the exception of a blanket

wrapped around him) when he dies. On the *Macbeth* set, Tynan recalls that when he "queried Roman's estimate of the amount of blood that would be shed by a small boy stabbed in the back, Roman replied, 'You didn't see my house in California last summer. . . . I know about bleeding.'"⁴⁵ A relationship between the Manson murders and the murders at the Macduff castle is obvious, and this relationship becomes more impressive as the nightmarish scene continues. When Lady Macduff tries to flee from her assailants, the camera shows a few of the other murderers gang-raping a screaming woman in a dingy corridor of the castle. Next, Lady Macduff, still scuffling to escape the killers, looks in on her two smaller children who have already been slain, their bodies mangled and drenched in blood. Finally, like Shakespeare, Polanski leaves the termination of Lady Macduff to the wild imagination of his audience; the audience is transformed into both the victim and the psychic instrument for terrorism.

In accordance with the desire of Theater of Cruelty to eliminate any residue of God as a potential source of salvation and deliverance for the audience, practically every mention of God and Christianity in Shakespeare's text (and there are many) is purposely omitted by Polanski and Tynan.⁴⁶ From beginning to end, Polanski's *Macbeth* emanates evil, it leaves no room for anything but Evil, it maintains a momentum of evil images and actions, it presents an overwhelmingly murky and evil world, and it implies that this world will continue to be evil as long as it includes witches. Not surprisingly, Tynan remarks, "I suspect that Roman believes in the existence of evil as an active force in the world. Certainly he takes a fairly low view of human motives."⁴⁷ The witches, to be sure, are shown to manipulate the world's events from the opening spell-casting scene to the supplemental last scene in which Donalbain is depicted approaching the witches' haunt. We, as the audience, are left with no feeling of relief, no comfort in the fact that Macduff avenges the murder of his family, that Macbeth is destroyed, that Malcolm takes his rightful position as king. Instead, we can only imagine more bloodshed and terrorism caused by the diabolic witches. Tomorrow will be as brutal as today.

Whereas it is widely documented that members of the 1971 audience interpreted this harrowing film in relation to the Manson murders, which would suggest the bewitched Macbeth or the hippie-looking witches as symbolic of Charles Manson, it is unclear to what extent the film was regarded as an effort to exonerate Manson or his followers, to shift the responsibility for their crimes away from them and onto the drugs, the witchcraft, and the counterculture with which they were associated. It is also unclear whether the film was ever seen to blame the state apparatus of

which Manson is largely a product: when Manson was arrested for the Tate-LaBianca murders he had already spent seventeen of his thirty-four years in state penitentiaries. If King Duncan, and not some kind of absent god, is to blame for the infiltration of the witches, then Macbeth is primarily a vehicle in the business of an already existent contention. Although Macbeth seems totally out-of-control while the witches seem to have total control, there are moments in the film when Macbeth's struggling will emerges and is emphasized. The most significant of these calculated moments are when Macbeth self-consciously responds to the criminal portentousness of the illusory dagger floating before him, when he pauses ruminatively and in quandary just prior to killing Duncan, and when he reports regretfully the murder of Duncan to his wife. It is insinuated that if Macbeth were a stronger and better person, he would have resisted the witches' charms and the persuasion of Lady Macbeth—who starts off headstrong and enthralled but becomes weaker and weaker until "by self and violent hands / Took off her life" (V. ix. 36-37). Yet, since this is not the case, Macbeth, like Manson in the media, becomes the personification of evil. And Macbeth, like Manson in the courtroom, is sentenced to death; Macduff decapitates Macbeth, and his "cursed head" (V. ix. 21) is fixed upon a pole, as the Captain says Macbeth displayed the head of Macdonwald. What goes around comes around, save for the witches. For them, for the most part, life is constant.

But if Macbeth is indeed an instrument and victim of complex circumstances beyond his control, then does it really follow that Manson or his devotees are too? Manson's actual role in the Tate-LaBianca murders is similar to that of Polanski's witches in the murders of Duncan, Banquo, and Macduff's household. Manson was the influential force behind the actions of his assassins: he did not participate with his own hands in the slaying. So it seems, then, that Susan Atkins, Katie Krenwinkel and Charles Watson were in a comparable situation to that of Polanski's Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. They were bewitched stooges assisting Manson's master plan, as many people, including the jurors, concluded at the time (Manson was convicted in the Tate-LaBianca trial on seven counts of conspiracy to commit murder).⁴⁸ In an ironic statement, Manson acknowledges this situation:

We as Americans have been taught to believe in *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. While I was free and out there *Pursuing Happiness* they took my *Liberty* and gave me *Life*. I was convicted of witchcraft in the Twentieth Century.⁴⁹

The irony, however, lies neither in Manson's literal reading of the *Declaration of Independence*, nor in a meditation on free will and coercion, which this discussion certainly invokes but chooses not to pursue, but rather in the public's acceptance of the Tate-LaBianca murders as the culmination of 1960's' radicalism. Manson was not affiliated with any readily identifiable countercultural group of the 1960's. In fact, he was openly antagonistic toward beatniks, folkniks, hippies, radicals, and civil rights activists. Manson could not relate to these people. They had not spent half of their lives in prison. Inasmuch as Manson is an identifiable product of the United States penal system, as he himself recognizes that he was socialized while incarcerated within this system ("My father is the jail. My father is the system"),⁵⁰ Manson serves only to consolidate the power structure behind this system. The Manson family and the Tate-LaBianca murders were thus appropriated and constructed to represent the allegedly anticipated and unavoidable result of the diversified 1960's' counterculture. To recall once more the telling words of Joan Didion, "the Sixties ended abruptly on August 9, 1969, ended at the exact moment when word of the murders on Cielo Drive traveled like brushfire through the community, and in a sense this is true. The tension broke that day. The paranoia was fulfilled."

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Notes

¹*Time* (January 25, 1971).

²Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times* (April 3, 1972). All references to Shakespeare's *Macbeth* are from the New Arden edition edited by Kenneth Muir (London: Methuen, 1984).

³Paul D. Zimmerman, *Newsweek* (January 10, 1972).

⁴Kenneth S. Rothwell, "Roman Polanski's *Macbeth*: Golgotha Triumphant," *Literature Film Quarterly*, 1 (1973), p. 71.

⁵Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), p. 64.

⁶A reprint of Elizabeth's statute and background information can be found in Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1959), pp. 156-59.

⁷Unlike the Elizabethan Act of 1563, the Jacobean Act of 1604 mandated capital punishment for a first offense of conjuring evil spirits (see Robbins, pp. 156-59). As noted by social historian Stuart Clark in his essay, "King James's *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship" in Sidney Anglo ed., *The Damned Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 161, the subsequent rate of prosecution dropped below that of Elizabeth's reign. James' harsher statute may have been a deterrent for those people interested in conjuring evil spirits or it may have encouraged those already attempting to conjure evil spirits to be more covert in their operations.

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⁸Reginald Scot, *A Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: 1584), p. 472.

⁹*Newes From Scotland*, (1591); (rpt. London: Curwen Press, 1924), pp. 18-28.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹For information about the witch craze in Renaissance England, see Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), Sidney Anglo ed., *The Damned Art*, and Robbins, pp. 156-59.

¹²James I, *Letters of King James VI & I*, ed. G. P. V. Akrigg (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1984), p. 250.

¹³See Kenneth Muir, ed., *Macbeth* (London: Methuen, 1951), pp. xv-xxv for a thorough discussion of the date of *Macbeth*.

¹⁴See Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

¹⁵Muir, pp. xx-xxiii.

¹⁶Holinshed's *Chronicles of Scotland* in "Appendix A" of Muir, p. 172.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁸Polanski cited in Bernard Weinraub, *The New York Times Magazine* (December 12, 1971), p. 79.

¹⁹Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 141.

²⁰Manson cited in Sy Wiziniski, *Charles Manson: Love Letters to a Secret Disciple* (Indiana: Moonmad Press, 1976), p. 199.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 142-43.

²²Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 3.

²³*Time* (November 21, 1969), p. 54.

²⁴Joan Didion, *The White Album* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), pp. 42 and 47.

²⁵Pauline Kael, *The New Yorker* (February 5, 1972), p. 76.

²⁶Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 27.

²⁷Polanski cited in Weinraub, p. 64.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 64.

²⁹Fredson Bowers, ed., Thomas Dekker, John Ford and William Rowley, *The Witch of Edmonton* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1958).

³⁰For examples of Manson paraphernalia see *The Manson File*, ed. Nikolas Schreck (New York: Amok Press, 1988).

³¹Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, ed. and trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 84.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 85.

³³Polanski cited in Weinraub, p. 64.

³⁴Artaud, p. 85.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 85.

³⁶Polanski cited in Weinraub, p. 68.

³⁷Kael, p. 76.

³⁸See photograph in Schreck, p. 151.

³⁹Manson and his followers were a source of inspiration for several other radical factions who lauded them for their terrorism. To give two well-known examples: Regarding the Manson murders, Bernadine Dohrn, leader of the Weather Underground, explained: "First they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them, and they even shoved a fork into the victim's stomach! Wild!" (Dohrn cited in Jane and Michael Stern, *Sixties People* [London: Macmillan, 1990], p. 197); and Yippie Jerry Rubin, after visiting Manson in prison, wrote: "I fell in love with Charlie Manson. . . . His words and courage inspired [me]."

(Rubin cited in Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* [New York: Bantam, 1987], p. 404).

⁴⁰Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror* (Indianapolis: Indiana Univ. Press, 1991), p. 11. For a relevant discussion of the relationship between tragedy, terror, catharsis, and theatrical terrorism, see pp. 18-22.

⁴¹See "Part One" of Elaine Scarry's *The Body and Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985).

⁴²*The Most Cruell and Bloody Murther Committed by an Inkeepers Wife* (London: 1606), A3.

⁴³Manson cited in Schreck, p. 135.

⁴⁴See Robbins, p. 278.

⁴⁵Kenneth Tynan, "The Polish Imposition," *Esquire*, 76.3 (September, 1971), p. 189.

⁴⁶Tynan recalls: "Except for odd lines like Banquo's 'In the great hand of God I stand,' we decided to eliminate overt religion from the script." *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴⁸He was convicted of another murder and given the death penalty, but was not executed because capital punishment was declared unconstitutional.

⁴⁹Manson, cited in Schreck, p. 26.

⁵⁰Manson, cited in John Gilmore and Ron Kenner, *The Garbage People* (Omega Press, 1971), p. 11.

Antigonus' Dream in *The Winter's Tale* by David Thatcher

"A dream is a theatre in which the dreamer is himself
the scene, the player, the prompter, the producer, the
author, the public, and the critic."

C. G. Jung

In the plays of Shakespeare, ghosts, whether they speak or not, usually appear to characters who are in a waking state, yet there are several instances of speaking ghosts appearing in dreams. In *Richard III*, for example, the ghosts of those Richard has slain appear, in the order of their deaths, both to him and to Richmond on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth Field; in *Cymbeline* Posthumus dreams of seeing the spirits of his parents and his brothers. In both these cases the ghosts are represented on the stage, implying or confirming that the persons are no longer alive, although not indicating to the audience whether the ghosts are to be accepted as objective or hallucinatory. Whether dreamed or not, most ghosts in Shakespeare (e.g., those in *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Cymbeline*, *Macbeth*) are represented rather than reported. Elmer Edgar Stoll has argued that "with Shakespeare, as with the Elizabethan dramatists generally, it may be taken as a rule, fairly absolute, not only that whatever is represented by him on stage is actual and objective, but that what is unobjective is not so represented."¹ However, the represented ghosts of Caesar and Banquo, as well as King Hamlet's ghost when he appears to his son in Gertrude's chamber, may well be hallucinations. A distinction (not always borne in mind, even by Stoll) should be made between the dream-ghosts (always reported, never represented) which appear in narratives (e.g., the ghost of Patroclus which appears to Achilles in the *Iliad*, and the ghost of Hector which appears to Aeneas in the *Aeneid*) and those (sometimes reported, sometimes represented) which appear in plays.

What then, we may wish to inquire, is the status of the unrepresented ghost in *The Winter's Tale*? In this play Antigonus has a dream in which what he assumes is the ghost of Hermione appears and speaks to him. Ostensibly addressing the baby Perdita although actually directing his words to the audience, he says: "I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o' th' dead / May walk again: if such thing be, thy mother / Appeared to me last night; for ne'er was dream / So like a waking."² To speak of "spirits o' th' dead" or "ghosts" in a dream context strikes me as highly problematic. In *Richard III* the word "ghost" appears not only in the stage directions and in speech prefixes but is cognate with Richard's

"shadows" (V. iii. 217) and with Clarence's "shadow," presumably that of Prince Edward, son of Henry VI and Queen Margaret (I. iv. 53). Richmond also has ghosts in mind when he reports his dream: "Methought their souls whose bodies Richard murdered / Came to my tent and cried on victory" (V. iii. 231-32). In *Cymbeline* (V. iv. 29 ff.) the dream figures enter "as in an apparition," and another stage direction reads "the Ghosts fall on their knees"—Sicilius himself refers to "we poor ghosts" and Jupiter addresses them as "you ghosts." In none of these cases, however, does the word "ghost" seem appropriate. Even if we take "ghost" in its loosest meaning as "the disembodied spirit of a deceased person" there is surely a crucial distinction to be drawn between a ghost (whether objective or hallucinatory) which is seen in a waking state and one (never objective) which is merely dreamed of: a seen ghost may have, or be believed to have, an objective existence, but a dream-ghost, whether represented or reported, can only possess, for the modern mind, a subjective or psychological reality. That it may be believed that dream-ghosts are actual, and even "confirmed" by "the same spirit" appearing to one person who is awake and another who is asleep, does not affect the issue, nor do cases of "the same spirit" appearing both as a represented ghost on stage and as a dream-ghost.³ A dream-ghost cannot possess objective reality within the dream itself, but it may be consistent with an objectified ghost existing outside the dream. In other words, actual ghosts don't walk into dreams—only dream-ghosts do. Jung would regard Antigonus as the "author" of Hermione's visitation, not merely its "audience" or "public."

The closest parallel to Antigonus' *reported* vision (including its terrifying effect) is that of Clarence who tells Richard of having dreamt of being spoken to in hell by the dead souls or shadows of those he has betrayed or slain (*Richard III*, I. iv. 43-63). One difference is that Clarence dreams of meeting departed souls in the underworld after he himself has died (becoming a ghost himself), whereas Antigonus dreams of the spirit of Hermione visiting him in his cabin while he is still, for a short time at least, actually alive. Another difference is that Clarence's dream (like Richard's) is revelatory of his sense of guilt; Antigonus' "guilt," on the other hand, lies not in any acts weighing on his conscience (exposing the child according to his oath at least gives Perdita a chance of survival) but merely in his fallibility in interpreting the dream-content.

Further comparison, however, elicits a significant dissimilarity: Clarence knew his victims were dead, but Antigonus has no evidence that Hermione is. In fact, *The Winter's Tale* offers the sole instance in Shakespeare's plays of a dream presenting the "ghost"

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of a person whom the dreamer has no certain prior knowledge is dead.⁴ "There is no precedent in Elizabethan drama," writes one editor, "for the spirit of a living person appearing to others either in dream or waking."⁵ One reason is that most ghosts, whether dreamed of or seen in a waking vision, are *represented* on stage, confirming (what might already be known by other means) that the persons are dead. Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* offers an interesting locus for comparison: Charlemont's father has been murdered, and his ghost appears to his sleeping son imploring him to "return to France, for thy old father's dead / And thou by murder disinherited."⁶ Starting from his dream, Charlemont apostrophizes his "affrighted soul" (24), asking what the meaning of his "fearful dream" (25) might be. Seeking corroboration he asks: "Soldier, saw'st / No apparition of a man?" (43-44), receiving the reply: "You dream, / Sir; I saw nothing." After Charlemont has dismissed the vision as an "idle apprehension, a vain dream" (62), the ghost reenters, impervious to the soldier's attempts to "sho[ot] it through" (67), whereupon Charlemont is contrite: "O pardon me. My doubtful heart was slow / To credit that which I did fear to know" (68-69). After disbelieving that a dream ghost can prove a death, Charlemont is proven wrong by the appearance of a real ghost (though, to the audience, this is the same ghost/actor they saw as spectators of Charlemont's dream); an equally skeptical Antigonus believes that his dream ghost does prove a death and is posthumously proven wrong when Hermione, having "preserved" (V. iii. 127) herself, is restored to Leontes in the statue scene. Many critics have noted that Antigonus is wrong about his dream, yet very few examine precisely *why* he is wrong. In this paper I want to explore three interlinking issues: whether what Antigonus sees is to be regarded as a dream or a waking vision, why it is a ghost he assumes he has seen, and how, trusting his experience despite his professed skepticism about dreams *and* ghosts, he misinterprets that experience so radically.

The first issue can be dealt with very briefly. That Antigonus was asleep seems apparent from the fact that his experience occurred at night while he was lying in his cabin; moreover, the reference to "slumber" makes more sense as a comparison if Antigonus was actually sleeping. Yet one critic notes "that Antigonus is positive that he was awake when the vision appeared,"⁷ and Schanzer has suggested that "Shakespeare leaves us purposely uncertain whether what Antigonus experienced was a dream or an apparition" (p. 190). What Schanzer really means, I think, is not "dream or apparition" but "dream or waking vision" ("apparition" being common to both). It seems to me that the lines point unambiguously both to a dream and to the vividness of that

dream ("ne'er was dream / So like a waking," "I . . . thought / This was so, and no slumber"). Moreover, Antigonus would hardly make the skeptical assertion that "dreams are toys" if he had not thought that his experience (which, after all, occurred at night, the time of "slumber") was, in fact, a dream which, this time, he had no reason to distrust.

Antigonus' first words ("I have heard, but not believed, the spirits o' th' dead / May walk again") indicate the distrust of hearsay evidence native to inveterate skeptics like Horatio.⁸ His lines express both skepticism about ghosts and the common view that they "walk," i.e., return from the dead and actually promenade around or wander back and forth (Fr. *revenant*). Hermione still being alive, Antigonus could, of course, not have seen an actual ghost (as Hamlet sees the actual ghost of his father or Brutus the ghost of Julius Caesar) while he was still awake, nor did he (like Richard III or Richmond or Clarence) dream of the ghost of someone he knew to be dead. Antigonus has not heard Paulina's statement that Hermione has died (III. ii. 197 ff.), a statement which is unquestioningly accepted as much by the audience as it is by Leontes;⁹ therefore, his view that she is dead must proceed from the content of the dream alone. He knows that the oracle has been asked to pronounce a verdict on Hermione, and, convinced of her fidelity, he believes it will exonerate her, for in an aside he predicts its decision will reduce Leontes to a laughing-stock (II. i. 199-200). Thus, having departed from Sicily with the baby Perdita before the oracle (which confirms his prediction) is read, he has no grounds, before his dream, of thinking Hermione is likely to have been executed for adultery. Even though the "ghost" of Hermione does not say she has been executed (or even that she has died, or even who she is), the dream itself contains a number of indications which seem to have persuaded Antigonus that she was dead. One indication is her angelic appearance, especially her "pure white robes" (ghosts are often dressed in white, as Hermione usually is in the statue scene). In a dream vision in *Henry VIII* Katherine sees what she supposes an angelic company ("spirits of peace," "blessed troop," "bright faces") who are described in the preceding stage direction as "six personages, clad in white robes."¹⁰ Hermione's behavior might also indicate ghostly status: she is described, emblematically, as "bowing thrice" and, in a mannerist or metaphysical conceit reminiscent of the *mater dolorosa* or madonna of Spanish Baroque sculpture, as crying so much her eyes "became two spouts." Antigonus reports her as having "melted into air,"¹¹ a vanishing trick typical of Shakespeare's ghosts, and doing so "with shrieks,"¹² another conventional Senecan trademark. In Shakespeare ghosts always come for a purpose: "They are instru-

ments of revenge or protection, they prophesy, or they crave proper burial," and they were believed to have some message to communicate, even if contemporaries sometimes failed to determine just what the message was.¹³ The prophecy the "ghost" of Hermione gives Antigonus ("thou ne'er shalt see / Thy wife Paulina more") epitomizes both ghosts' characteristic passion for prophecy and (although Antigonus does not register it) the deceptively ambiguous aspect of prophecies in general—Hermione's words could signify Antigonus' death, Paulina's death, or Antigonus' permanent exile in Bohemia. The ghost is also true to type in that it expresses a wish (to call the child Perdita) and communicates a message (to take the child to Bohemia), although the latter could easily have been managed by other means, as it was in Shakespeare's main source, Robert Greene's *Pandosto*. According to one critic, both the matter and the manner of this speech seem "to burlesque an outmoded type of melodramatic 'vision' poetry—such as *The Mirror for Magistrates*, with its series of informative ghosts—and this prevents the audience from taking it too seriously and leaves them emotionally free to speculate about the nature of the vision."¹⁴ Such speculation, as I will be suggesting later, is unlikely to be a part, for any audience, Elizabethan or modern, of a first-time response to the play, but would be entirely appropriate in second and subsequent encounters.

Hermione must be dead, Antigonus concludes, because she appeared to him as a ghost.¹⁵ Like Leontes, who associates dreams with "what's unreal" and with "nothing" (I. ii. 140-42), Antigonus has always been reluctant to put any credence in dreams ("dreams are toys"); furthermore, although he expresses profound skepticism about "spirits o' th' dead" walking again, he is so struck by the vividness of his experience ("ne'er was dream / So like awaking," "I . . . thought / This was so, and no slumber"), by the credibility of the apparition and by his "affrighted" reaction that he is prepared, on this occasion, to take the dream on trust: "Dreams are toys; / Yet for this once, yea superstitiously, / I will be squared by this." It has sometimes been suggested that the adverb "superstitiously" may refer to the Catholic view of ghosts as opposed to the more skeptical Protestant or Puritan view,¹⁶ and that Antigonus had "previously taken the Protestant line but was converted by the vision [to the Catholic position]."¹⁷ There are three objections to this line of reasoning: first, Antigonus is a non-Christian in a play with a non-Christian setting (though, of course, it may have Christian meanings and analogues); second, theological views about ghosts are not necessarily relevant to dream-ghosts; and third, not once does Shakespeare use "superstitious" (or its cognates) to distinguish between Protestant and Catholic

beliefs; moreover, on two other occasions he employs it to refer specifically to belief in dreams.¹⁸ Therefore it seems to me totally inappropriate to ponder, as Bethell does, whether Antigonus' "vision" (Bethell forgets it is a *dream-vision*) is angelic or diabolic, and anachronistic to chastise Antigonus for not realizing it may be diabolic: "When he thinks himself most Catholic (which is probably the secondary significance of 'superstitiously') Antigonus is, in fact, most Protestant; he hastily attaches to his vision an interpretation which his moral sense should have repudiated; the doubtful—for it may be diabolic—vision weighs more with him than what he knows of Hermione's purity" (p. 195). It is less the inefficacy of his "moral sense" than the feebleness of his reasoning powers which leads Antigonus to misread his dream. Granted, both Catholic and Protestant views subscribe to the notion that an actual ghost may deliberately mislead. As Hamlet admits: "The spirit that I have seen / May be a devil, and the devil hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape."¹⁹ But, unless the devil creates the dream, dream ghosts cannot mislead, they can only be misinterpreted. At the very moment that Antigonus talks of "dreaming" he conveniently forgets that he has been dreaming—what has appeared to him is nothing more than a fantasy, a phantasmagoria, a dream-ghost, not a ghost, actual or hallucinatory, perceived in a waking state. In other words, he adopts the irrational position that an actual ghost has entered his dream state, that the ghost is Hermione's, and that it is to be trusted. In terms of Macrobius' commentaries on the *Somnium Scipionis*, Antigonus has mistaken *phantasma* for *oraculum*. A *phantasma* is an insignificant dream which contains nothing of prophetic value, but a dream may be recognized as an *oraculum*, "when in sleep there appears a relative or other sacred person, such as a priest or a priestess, or even a god, who openly announces what is or is not to come, what should be done in specified cases and what should be avoided."²⁰

In *Hamlet* Horatio's skepticism is used to validate the authenticity of an objective ghost and to eliminate any possibility that it is a hallucination on Hamlet's part—the clinching proof of the Ghost's objective reality is that a number of witnesses have seen it simultaneously on different occasions, and can give identical descriptions of it. Antigonus' dual skepticism, though relinquished, about ghosts and dreams is surely designed to encourage our acceptance of his dream-ghost. The imminent death of Antigonus, by fulfilling (if not exclusively following from) the dream-ghost's prophecy that he would never see his wife again, further strengthens the illusion of authenticity. The communication of the name Perdita (its first use in the play) seems to be authenticated by Time's choric use of it at the beginning of Act IV as well as by

Florizel and Paulina later.²¹ Even though only attendant Lords were present to hear Antigonus swear to expose the child, the "ghost" of Hermione knows about the "oath."²² As late as the last act, but before the statue scene, Shakespeare is still slyly insinuating the correctness of Antigonus' interpretation by reminding us frequently of Hermione's "death" and by recalling her visitation in Antigonus' dream, especially his reference to ghosts walking again: Paulina tells Leontes how she would behave if she were "the ghost [of Hermione] that walked" (V. i. 54-81) and assures him that, were she to choose his next queen, "she shall be such / As, walked your first queen's ghost, it should take joy / To see her in your arms (V. i. 79-81). Because Hermione is not dead, and therefore cannot be represented on stage as a ghost, her "ghost" has to appear in a dream, the major dramatic purpose of which is, palpably, to reinforce the notion in the mind of the audience that she is dead, and, of course, to heighten the intensity of Hermione's unexpected restoration.

The audience, on the other hand, possesses enough knowledge to deduce, if it is not captivated by the seductive power of narrative, that the "ghost" of Hermione cannot possibly be an actual ghost. Hermione has heard the oracle pronouncing her "chaste" and Polixenes "blameless," and, before she faints at the news of the death of Mamillius, she hears a remorseful Leontes admit his own "injustice." If Hermione, by whatever means, had met her death, it is highly improbable that her actual ghost would have instructed Antigonus to expose the child, declared by the oracle, in Hermione's hearing, to be "an innocent babe truly begotten"; it is more likely that an actual ghost would have implored him to cancel his mission and bring Perdita back home unharmed, promising that Leontes would not be doomed to live "without an heir." So not only could the actual ghost of Hermione not have appeared to Antigonus even in a waking vision (because she was still alive), it did not do so in his dream, even if we regard such a thing as possible. Nineteenth-century explanations of how Hermione could appear as a ghost if she were not dead ring hollow and contrived: "At the time she appeared to him she was still lying in that death-like swoon, into which she fell when the news of the loss of her son reached her as she stood before the judgment-seat of her husband, at a time when she ought not to have been out of her chamber."²³ A similar explanation invokes the notion of the "astral body": "In times of great personal distress, sorrow, impending calamity, and death, there is something that may leave the body, having sufficient resemblance to the living form as to be recognized by others at a distance who naturally are in close sympathy."²⁴ Nor does it make much sense to claim, with a more recent critic, that one purpose of

the dream is "to show Hermione to be actively involved in the direction of her daughter's fate" (Pyle, p. 63). In *Pandosto*, Pyle continues, Perdita is washed to the shores of Bohemia "by mere chance," whereas in *The Winter's Tale* Antigonus decides to go ashore "believing that to be Apollo's wish. This is not the result of whim or chance, but of Hermione's guiding hand." It is difficult to see how the content of a dream can be the result of Hermione's "guiding hand," especially since Hermione's "ghost" is not objective.

How does Antigonus, as Jung's dreamer-critic, interpret his dream of a "ghost"? He has not heard, as the audience has, the oracle's judgment that "Hermione is chaste" (III. ii. 130). Although earlier (II. i. 133-58) he had staunchly defended Hermione against Leontes' charges, he now believes (with no apparent surprise at the turn of events) that Apollo's oracle has vindicated them, and that Hermione has been executed ("I do believe / Hermione hath suffered death"). One critic has declared that the spirit of Hermione "orders him to take the child to its father's country."²⁵ This is patently inaccurate—she only orders it to be taken to *Bohemia*, whereas it is Antigonus who (mistakenly and illogically) assumes Polixenes' paternity. "Poor wretch," he says, addressing the child, "that for thy mother's fault art thus exposed / To loss, and what may follow!" Antigonus quite forgets that Leontes decided to expose the child before the trial (in concert with the oracle) could prove or disprove her guilt. The stated wish of Hermione's "ghost" that the child should be left in Bohemia he interprets as *Apollo's* wish that what he terms "the issue of King Polixenes" be laid "upon the earth / Of its right father." There are two approaches to this problem: 1. Antigonus has tacitly assumed that Hermione is conveying not her own personal wishes but instructions from Apollo which may have accompanied his oracle; 2. The audience may allow the possibility that Hermione's "ghost" may be the creation of Apollo, as, for example, a phantom resembling Aeneas is created by Apollo in the *Iliad* (V. 449-50) or by Juno in the *Aeneid* (X. 637-44). In this second case Apollo would be the author of the dream speaking through the figure of Hermione: working behind the scenes in approved romance fashion, Apollo deliberately creates a scenario which, by luring Antigonus into a series of false deductions, compels him to carry out Apollo's main design—to convey Perdita to Bohemia and, in accordance with his oracle, to restore Perdita to her parents in the "happy ending" (if any ending can be called "happy" with Mamillius, Antigonus and a shipload of mariners all dead, even if Paulina does get a convenient replacement for the man "torn to pieces with a bear").²⁶

We may well agree, then, that the dream “convinces Antigonus that [Hermione] was guilty”²⁷ and still ask ourselves whether it should have. In either case we are still saddled with the apparent contradiction (all too infrequently noticed by commentators) between what appears to indicate the possibility of Hermione’s innocence (“pure white robes / Like sanctity itself”) and Antigonus’ assumption of her guilt. Though the “pure white robes” may have suggested to Antigonus that Hermione was a ghost, they certainly fail to suggest to him, in his subsequent analysis of the dream, that she may be angelically innocent. It may be that his lines are ironic, i.e., he is saying that Hermione *looked* innocent despite her guilt. Yet we are dealing, I submit, less with irony than with a train of faulty logic, or rather wild conjecture, which runs something like this: “I had a dream in which Hermione appeared to me like a spirit—therefore Hermione must be dead, therefore she must have been executed (‘suffered death’), therefore the trial must have taken place and the defendant found guilty of adultery, therefore the child must be the ‘issue’ of Polixenes, which is confirmed by her wish that the child be left in Bohemia.” There are serious problems with this congeries of deductions: because Hermione appeared *like* a spirit does not mean she *was* a spirit, i.e., that she was dead (one can dream of a live person being dead just as easily as of a dead person being still alive);²⁸ because she is dead does not mean she was executed²⁹ (she may have died of her weakness following the birth of Perdita, or of other natural, or accidental, causes); because she was found guilty of adultery does not mean Polixenes is the father of the child (Leontes may still be the father despite his wife’s infidelity—we should remember that Antigonus was present when Paulina tried to persuade Leontes of the physical resemblance between him and Perdita); because the spirit wished the child left in Bohemia does not necessarily indicate paternity on Polixenes’ part (Hermione might have looked to Polixenes, demonstrably a doting father, or to his fellow Bohemians as possible rescuers of the child). Could Apollo’s oracle, Antigonus might have asked himself, have erred in finding Hermione guilty? How might she have died if not executed for adultery? Is she dead at all? Antigonus is eaten by a bear before he has time to pose these questions. “He is, indeed, ripe for death,” writes a critic. “It would be cruel to keep him alive to learn how he had been deluded by logic.”³⁰ It is illogic, not logic, he has been deluded by. His supposition that Perdita is a bastard is surely less a “lack of faith” in Hermione which provides “internal justification” for his death (Garber, 1974, p. 171) than an invalid deduction among several others with no direct bearing on whether he deserved to die.

Antigonus' inventiveness as author of his dream is betrayed by his gullibility as a "public" and his illogicality as a "critic." Agreed, "the dream of Antigonus convinces the audience that Hermione is dead."³¹ The scene is clearly meant to reinforce the impression, conveyed by Paulina and accepted by Leontes and the audience, that her death has occurred. Its dramatic function, however, depends upon suspensions of logic. It is possible that when Shakespeare wrote the scene he had not yet thought of reanimating Hermione. But even had the play ended (as in *Pandosto*) with the death of Hermione, Antigonus' conclusion, though now correct, would still have been arrived at by means of invalid arguments. In terms of plot the effect of the dream, besides the naming of Perdita, is to convey her to Bohemia as opposed to some other "remote and desert place" (II. iii. 175) as decreed by Leontes; in terms of characterization it exposes Antigonus' intellectual limitations. Surely Stoll is mistaken to include Antigonus among those "who dream more wisely than they can know or think" (p. 218, n. 60), Antigonus being a striking exception to the cases he cites.

One final point: it should not be forgotten that much depends on whether we are experiencing the scene for the first or second time. In both instances we know, as Antigonus does not, that Hermione is innocent, but in the former case we have no reason to distrust Paulina's word that Hermione is dead and therefore we may be prepared (as I have maintained the first Elizabethan audience was) to accept Antigonus' view, even though it is only in a dream, that her spirit has appeared to him; in the latter case, however, knowing that Hermione did not die, we are compelled to acknowledge that Antigonus' premises are as mistaken as his invalid conclusions. It is at this juncture that we are enfranchised, in Bethell's words, to "speculate about the nature of the vision." If Mercutio, in keeping with Platonic skepticism, is right in calling dreams "the children of an idle brain / Begot of nothing but vain fantasy" (*Rom.*, I. iv. 97-98) then he and, initially at least, Antigonus are justified in viewing them, and their interpretation, with suspicion and trepidation. The same is true in regard to ghosts. If trusting a dream is a perilous matter, trusting a ghost who appears in a dream confounds the problem. A man, like Antigonus, inveterately skeptical about ghosts and dreams, should surely have been extremely wary of a ghost appearing in a dream. Once we become familiar with the scene we are at liberty to respond to the poignantly ironic spectacle of a compassionate, well-intentioned man who dreams of a "ghost" and who, casting skepticism "superstitiously" aside when it would appear most needed, arrives at

false conclusions which nevertheless aid and abet the "happy" conclusions befitting the romance genre of the play.

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Notes

¹*Shakespeare Studies* (New York: Ungar, 1960), pp. 213-214. See also Stoll's "The Objectivity of the Ghosts in Shakespeare," *PMLA*, 22 (1907), pp. 201-33, and John Jump, "Shakespeare's Ghosts," *Critical Quarterly*, 12 (1970), 339-351. Like most of the works which deal with the phenomena of dreams and ghosts in Shakespeare, most recently Marjorie Garber's *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (New York: Routledge, Chapman, Hall, 1987) and Jonah's *Shakespeare's Hidden World* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1989), neither of these two articles refers to Antigonus' dream-ghost. However, I shall be citing briefly from the standard work on the subject, Marjorie Garber's *Dream in Shakespeare* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974), which does refer to it (pp. 171-172).

²III. iii. 14-45. All references to this and other Shakespeare plays are to *The Complete Signet Classic Shakespeare*, ed. Sylvan Barnet (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963).

³Stoll, p. 219, gives examples.

⁴There is a precedent in life, however. Refuting the notion that "the appearance of Hermione's spirit to Antigonus is proof that when the play was first written Hermione did actually die . . . because in Shakespeare's day it would not have been thought possible to see the spirit of a living person." J. H. P. Pafford cites Donne's vision of the ghost of his still living wife; however, his reference to *Romeo and Juliet* (V. i. 1-11) is not relevant since Juliet is not a ghost and Romeo sees himself, not as a ghost, but simply as dead. See Pafford, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (London: Methuen, 1963), p. xxv.

⁵Ernest Schanzer, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 15.

⁶Irving Ribner, ed. (London: Methuen, 1964), II. vi. 20-21.

⁷E. H. Ranney, cited in H. H. Furness, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, New Variorum Edition (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1898), p. 143.

⁸Cf. Horatio's "I have heard" and "So have I heard" (*Hamlet*, I. i. 149, 165), and his "Tush, tush, 'twill not appear" (I. i. 30). Cf. the Puritan Languabeau Snuffe: "Tush, tush, their walking spirits are mere imaginary fables. There's no such thing in *rerum natura*" (*The Atheist's Tragedy*, IV. iii. 275-76).

⁹"Hermione is dead. Everything confirms it. Leontes sees her dead. . . . She and Mamillius are buried in one grave." Fitzroy Pyle, *The Winter's Tale: A Commentary on the Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 62. The lines of Leontes to which Pyle refers read: "Prithee bring me to the dead bodies of my queen and son. / One grave shall be for both" (III. ii. 233-34). Pyle confuses a stated intention with an accomplished fact.

¹⁰IV. ii. 83, 87, 88. As Sir Thomas Browne wrote in "Letter to a Friend" (c. 1656) "white vestments" are also a frequent object of dream experience. In a sonnet ("Methought I saw My Late Espoused Saint") written in 1658, Milton says the ghost of his dead wife "came vested all in white, pure as her mind."

¹¹Cf. Prospero to Ferdinand: "These our actors, / As I foretold you, were all spirits and / Are melted into air, into thin air" (*The Tempest*, IV. i. 148-150). When Macbeth wished to question the witches, "they made themselves air, into which they vanished" (I. v. 5). The Ghost in *Hamlet* "faded on the crowing of the cock" (I. i. 157).

¹²Cf. the "shadow" Clarence met in hell who "shrieked out loud" (*Richard III*, I. iv. 54), the ghosts which "did shriek and squeal about the streets" (*Julius Caesar*, II. ii. 24), and, most significantly, in *The Winter's Tale* itself, when Paulina says that, were she to take the part of Hermione's ghost, she would "shriek" (V. i. 65). However, unlike many ghosts, Hermione does not explicitly identify herself.

¹³Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 596. Thomas documents these and other purposes.

¹⁴S. L. Bethell, ed., *The Winter's Tale* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), p. 194.

¹⁵"[Antigonus] says that he does not believe Hermione is dead." Stoll, p. 209n. Antigonus: "I do believe / Hermione hath suffered death." Did Stoll inadvertently read a negative into this? Did he read "suffered" to mean "eluded"?

¹⁶"The extreme Protestant (as of the Puritans) was that either the appearance of the dead was assumed by angel or devil or that it was illusory. The traditional Catholic belief (to which High Anglicans would incline) was that for some purposes, good and ill, the dead were themselves permitted to return." Bethell, p. 194. As in Bethell's case, none of the many books and articles which comment on Shakespeare's ghosts in the light of Christian (and pagan) beliefs seems to question the relevance of such beliefs to dream-ghosts.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁸*Julius Caesar*, II. i. 195, and *Troilus and Cressida*, II. i. 195. In other instances Shakespeare uses "superstition" to refer to any unfounded or irrational belief based on fear or ignorance.

¹⁹II. ii. 605-07. Cf. "Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned" at I. iv. 40, and Brutus to the ghost of Caesar: "Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil?" (IV. iii. 276).

²⁰Cited in Walter Clyde Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1960), p. 199.

²¹I have dealt with the problems presented by the reference to Perdita in Antigonus' dream in an article entitled "Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*," *The Explicator*, 51 (Fall, 1992), 6-8. Its gist is as follows: either we accept a supernatural explanation, i.e., that through something like precognition or telepathy (or, I would like to add now, through the mediumship of Apollo) Antigonus' dream accurately reflected an actual choice of name on the part of the real Hermione, or we have to admit that Shakespeare has neglected to show a material mode of transmission from Hermione (or Paulina) to Antigonus.

²²Compare II. iii. 183 and III. iii. 29. First Hermione says it was "fate" which made Antigonus the "thrower-out" of Perdita, then contradicts herself by saying the "ungentle business" was instigated by Leontes.

²³George MacDonald, cited in Furness, p. 142.

²⁴*Ibid.* The account continues in similar transcendental vein: "There is reason in Hermione's case for this sudden separation of spirit and body: it is the mother's overwhelming love for her baby child; her anxiety for its welfare [why doesn't she ask Antigonus to bring it back rather than expose it?]; her fear of impending death in a desert land. Her spirit liberated would fly to that most dear to her." p. 143.

²⁵Pafford, p. i. Elsewhere (p. xxv, n. 5) Pafford notes Antigonus' assumption, but does not raise the question of whether it is valid.

²⁶V. ii. 65.

²⁷Pafford, p. lix.

²⁸Pafford does note this discrepancy: "Antigonus need not have assumed that Hermione was dead" (p. xxv) but misses the others.

²⁹"How else, he had evidently argued with himself, could she have met her death? That was the only peril she was exposed to when he left Sicilia." Pyle, p. 64.

³⁰Pyle, p. 64.

³¹Pafford, p. lix. Garber (1974; p. 169) observes that the “net effect” of Paulina’s avowal (II. ii. 201-05) that Hermione cannot be revived “is to put into the minds of the audience the very possibility she denies.”

The 1993 Alabama Shakespeare Festival by Craig Barrow

The 1993 Alabama Shakespeare Festival featured three plays by Shakespeare in its six play repertory season; two were in the large 750 seat Festival Stage, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *1 Henry IV* while *2 Henry IV* was done in the smaller, approximately 200 seat Octagon. Of the three Shakespeare productions *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the least successful. The magic and psychic health of dreaming, the world of the fairies, and even the frame story of Theseus and Hippolyta lacked force, clarity, and imaginative power. Steven David Martin as Puck was effective, but Herb Downer as Oberon was not. The most enjoyable parts of the production occurred when the Mechanicals were on stage, but these parts did not fit into any whole. Since I saw the production in early May, perhaps the performances improved later in the season. Perhaps also with the histories and an excellent *Heartbreak House* resources in repertory were stretched too thin.

Both Parts of *Henry IV* were a triumph, however, with *2 Henry IV* being the better production. Montgomery, a state capital with important monuments to Civil Rights and the Confederacy, is a proper setting for Shakespeare's histories. Audiences are keenly aware of the costs of leadership, its failures, and its successes, and even though the *Henry IV* plays show the education and development of a good king, Henry V, Alabama audiences feel little historical dislocation—the plays seem contemporary even though they are not.

The two *Henry IV* productions in part were continuous with last year's Alabama Shakespeare Festival production of *Richard II*. Greg Thornton continued his role as Henry IV, and Julian Gamble in *2 Henry IV* continued his portrayal of Northumberland. Except for Herb Downer's substitution as Northumberland in *1 Henry IV* and the need for two different actors to play Poins due to other repertory commitments, most of the actors and actresses remained in the same roles in both plays. Because of repertory demands, some changes were inevitable.

Even though Kent Thompson directed *1 Henry IV* with the assistance of Susan Willis, while Stephen Hollis directed *2 Henry IV*, and even though the production spaces were very different—the Octagon providing intimacy and the Festival Stage spectacle—the core of both plays was the same, the interplay of Hal with Henry IV and Falstaff. This core tended to minimize the differences between the plays caused by Shrewsbury and the disease

and death ridden closed world of *2 Henry IV*. In some ways, this core can be seen, as Harold Toliver has observed in "Falstaff, the Prince, and the History Play,"¹ as at heart a morality play, with Hal as Everyman and the King and Hotspur and Falstaff being the ministering "Angels" pulling at Hal's soul in terms of appetite, valor, honor, and national service.

While excellence in acting can be seen nearly everywhere in each production, the core of both plays is superbly served by Ray Chambers as Hal, Greg Thornton as Henry IV, and Roger Forbes as Falstaff. Thornton handles the strategic politics of office and the emotional swings of disappointment and reaffirmation of faith in Hal nicely. Chambers and Forbes are brilliant together. Forbes' comic timing swallows Hal's tricks with the facility of a trout taking a lure. He allows the audience ample opportunity to feel Hal's entrapment, before escaping through clever lies. Chambers beautifully handles those many situations where Hal is friendly with Falstaff yet judges him and is sympathetic to his father, Henry IV, while also critical of him. Chambers is so gifted that audiences can read Hal's needs, his responses to others, and his projection of an idea of what social life should be. He effectively shows what Toliver has described as "an effective adjustment between the inner self and the collective social organism."²

The only actor who fell short of the mark in either production was John Preston as Hotspur. Charles Caldwell's costuming also did not help with Hotspur's initial costuming. Those red boots above the knee looked childish, and while there is something childishly willful about Hotspur, the boots made Preston, a big man, look more like a teddy bear than a threatening warrior. Preston's efforts to do a Northern English accent also were annoying—better to forget the effort than appear labored or to stumble. Because of Preston's flawed effort, the Hal/Hotspur comparison fails to reach its full potential in *1 Henry IV*. Also, the fighting at Shrewsbury could have been better choreographed—it looked as if everyone were moving under water in slow motion.

But while these matters distract, they do not bother much. Audiences of both productions were emotionally involved and engaged. While much of the success of both plays is due to Greg Thornton, Roger Forbes, and Ray Chambers, several other fine performances are worth noting—Carol Morley as Mistress Quickly, John Tyson as Bardolph, and Shane Henry as Peto. Barry Boys also did a fine job as the mystical Glendower.

Alabama Shakespeare Festival performances of *Richard II* and the two parts of *Henry IV* have been a treat. One cannot help but look forward to *Henry V* next season and to further Shakespeare histories in seasons to come. With *Othello* and *The Tempest* also

Alabama Shakespeare Festival

slated for next season, the Alabama Shakespeare festival has challenged itself and will surely intrigue its audiences.

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Notes

¹Harold E. Toliver, "Falstaff, the Prince, and the History Play," *Henry IV. Part I*, ed. James L. Sanderson (New York: Norton, 1969), p. 179.

²Toliver, p. 173.